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The Nation.

March 27, 1982 $1.25

EDITORIAL

NICARAGUA'S TIME OF PERIL

The thirty-day suspension of civil liberties and the declaration of "a state of emergency" in Nicaragua should sadden all those who think of themselves as friends of that plundered and ravaged country's three-year-old revolution. The peril to Nicaragua from the United States cited by the Sandinist government as its justification is no doubt real, and the Sandinists have reason to believe they are virtually in a state of war. But still, in our view, the suspension of liberties in that country is not only wrong, it will also be ineffective. In the long run it can only place the Nicaraguan revolution in greater peril.

To avoid or resist an American-backed invasion or destabilization campaign, Nicaragua requires above all that its people believe they have something worth defending. Until recently, despite inexcusable governmental interference with the press, opposition political parties and unions, it was clear that almost all Nicaraguans were united against outside intervention.

But in imposing a state of emergency, the Sandinists have given more of their fellow citizens reason to seek relief from the suppression of political dissent. We cling to the hope that the revolution will fulfill its promise to create an open society, but suspension of rights and liberties plays directly into the hands of those who seem intent on adding to Nicaragua's troubles.

Inevitably some friends of the Nicaraguan revolution will argue for silence in this dangerous time. It is our belief, however, that ignoring or covering up the abuses of the Sandinist regime does it no service.

Those who have long plotted against the revolution will insist, of course, that what has happened now was inevitable. We disagree. By imperiling the Nicaraguan government, they forced the worst from the Sandinists. They are partners with the Sandinists in deserving blame.

THE MYTH OF PRODUCTIVITY
Harry Magdoff

PENTAGON ON THE WARPATH
Robert C. Aldridge

MAKING PAIN: U.S. POLICY IN VIETNAM
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SONTAG LETTERS
Joseph Brodsky
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Tibor R. Machan
and others

MIDDLETOWN REVISITED
Gloria Emerson

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

THE PURSUIT OF. . . CHARM

BENJAMIN DeMOTT

Public enthusiasm for George F. Will, the conservative columnist and talk show regular, has been building fast in recent days. Appetite for new faces and new manners is partly responsible. Suited up in a vested navy pin-stripe—specs, bow tie, youthful shock of straight hair—Will offers the not-yet-stale look of the professorial-comer, and his air of patient courtesy contrasts nicely, on *Agronsky & Co.*, with the impression of fuming bad temper left, on the same show, by James J. Kilpatrick. Will's ability to speak in complete sentences unassisted by Teleprompter also stimulates awe. (Both on the page and in person Will fancies balance, antithesis and alliteration, as in his declaration—after the Polish loan decision—that the Reagan Administration *l*oves *c*ommerce more than it *l*oathes *c*ommunism.) And I've heard a number of WASPs praise Will in terms that suggest eagerness to show the ecumenical flag (Will is a Roman Catholic).

But approval of this self-proclaimed Tory comes from other, less easily discounted sources as well. Several sound journalists on the left have admired Will in print. The readership of his newspaper column and semimonthly pages in *Newsweek* includes swarms of left-leaners and independents. The newspaper column won a Pulitzer Prize in 1977. And his star continues to rise. Will has lately added David Brinkley's Sunday show on ABC to his credits. Dan Rather quotes his sayings to President Reagan. Norman Podhoretz quotes his sayings to MacNeil and Lehrer. The Reagans visit his house for dinner. The President calls him his friend.

In a word, a considerable media success. More than a hundred of Will's columns are collected in *The Pursuit of Virtue and Other Tory Notions*

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LETTERS.

WHICH 'ISM' IS IT?

New York City

As a past admirer, I was shocked by Susan Sontag's simplistic anticommunist tirade at Town Hall ["Communism and the Left," *The Nation*, Feb. 27]. What communism? Russian, Chinese, Ethiopian, European, Sandinist, or maybe the thirteen different U.S. flavors? It is a term so tainted with devil tones as to be practically useless in intelligent public conversation. As far as Poland is concerned, if the Russians and the Catholic Church wish to fight to the death on this issue, I myself would be more than happy to sell tickets and provide the popcorn.

For Sontag's edification, I have seen a Solidarity-made film that was smuggled out of Poland, and the leaders of the union clearly view themselves not as born-again capitalists but as true "communists." Sontag's song would have been best sung in chorus with Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra, not from the stage of Town Hall.

Abbie Hoffman

DANGEROUS OBFUSCATION

New York City

There has always been an element on the left prone to cry "fascist" at any right-of-center government, whether Lyndon Johnson's, Richard Nixon's or Ronald Reagan's. . . . Susan Sontag, in declaring that "communism is fascism," is guilty of the same sort of dangerous obfuscation. If communism is fascism, always and everywhere, then there is obviously no difference between Stalin's Communism, which sent Alexander Solzhenitsyn to the gulag, and Khrushchev's Communism, which got him out of it and allowed him to publish his writings about some of the horrors he had seen. Equally, if Poland's present government is fascist, then there is no difference between cutting off people's telephones (which Sontag seems to find especially obnoxious) and cutting off their lives—as do such certified fascist governments as those of Argentina, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Perhaps Sontag considers these distinctions trivial. If so, let me remind her of the Nagy government of Hungary and the Dubcek government of Czechoslovakia—both staffed from top to bottom by veteran Communists. Both seemed quite prepared to do what Sontag swears no Communist government can do: tolerate "democratic government and workers' self-rule." The trouble was that Russia wouldn't tolerate *them*.

Robert Claiborne

DESIRERS AFTER A SYSTEM

South Hadley, Mass.

The only difference between communism and fascism is that the latter lost the war. By the most modest calculation, the sum total of victims that the former has to its name in the countries that experience its rule is twenty times greater than that of the victims of fascism. This may be called the ultimate defeat of fascism; by the same token, it is the only flaw in Susan Sontag's equation of the two.

Since her main purpose was to bail the American left out of the hopeless swamp of its intellectual provincialism, the resistance she has encountered is absolutely breathtaking. To believe in a doctrine that has resulted in so many corpses is tantamount to believing in the nuclear weapon: pure Marxism is as pure as pure bomb.

Sontag's equation rests on the structural tautology of both *isms*. The literati, however, are by temperament historians rather than futurists: while capable of diagnosis, they routinely shy away from making a prognosis. The evil thing about communism is not so much its record or its present, but its promise—the procreation of tyranny.

Whether claimed by political upheavals or airplane crashes, the dead are always subject to oblivion, just as the living are to argument; neither can be helped in a substantial way. Future lives are at stake in the quarrel between Sontag and her opponents, lives which should be spared the herding and ordering around that several generations in this century were doomed to. Lives should be allowed to run their natural course, however chaotic or precarious that may be. The ideology that spawns *Polizeistadt* after *Polizeistadt* should be buried before it reroutes and ruins more souls and flesh.

The point is that communism is not yet another bankrupt or arguable political theory: it is a form of entropy. Its crimes are not political: they are anthropological. Both as a doctrine and as a system, it reduces the genetic potential of the species for thinking as well as for acting. In this sense, the Sontag equation almost flatters fascism posthumously, since the Nazis were not around long enough to provide a real comparison. And it is only by nostalgia for the failed underdog that one could explain the fervor with which Messrs. David Hollinger, Daniel Singer, Philip Pochoda et al. argue against Sontag's statement in the pages of *The Nation*. At any rate, one gets a terrific sense of *déjà vu* because of their lingo and their type of mental operation.

The desire for a system, let alone the devotion to one, betrays not an individual's integrity but the tendency of his mind to abbreviate reality. Thanks to overpopulation, overcommunication and overarmament, we have entered today the stage where there is no room for *isms*, regardless of their pedigrees, for they result in schisms. The world cries out for social work, not for political debate. To engage in the latter means not only dodging responsibilities; it means playing in the world of tomorrow the same debilitating role that Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski and his subordinates play at present in Poland: that of the fifth column.

Joseph Brodsky

DOING WHAT CAN BE DONE

Warwick, R.I.

. . . Lost in the fascinating Sontag debate is the crucial point: what *can* be done to help the people of Poland, Afghanistan and other nations within the Soviet orbit? It is not a defense of the "utter villainy" of the Soviet Union to suggest that the democratic left should concentrate its efforts where they might have some real effect.

Reviving the rhetoric of the cold war, escalating the military budget and increasing nuclear tensions do nothing to help the people of Poland, Afghanistan, etc. Quite the contrary. Since 1945, history has amply proved that rattling the saber only causes the Soviet Union to dig in its heels, make life within the Soviet orbit more (not less) repressed and ratchet the arms race up another notch. Indeed, the arms race, with its unbearable financial and social costs, is plainly destroying American society in the name of protecting it, not to mention its dire consequences within the Soviet Union.

The only course that *might* help the repressed peoples within the Soviet hegemony is a substantial and steady reduction in cold-war tensions. If we responded favorably (without for a moment ceasing our insistence on freedom everywhere in the world, in El Salvador as well as in Poland) to what may be genuine Soviet offers to reduce arms, we might begin a reduction of suspicions on both sides. Might that not cause the Russians to begin to respond affirmatively rather than negatively to the powerful, evolutionary demands for liberalization within Eastern Europe?

Peace not war, cold or hot, is the only way to a better life the world over. There is, of course, no guarantee that such a course would reduce repression within the Soviet empire. But we know beyond question that threatening the Soviet Union only makes things worse. Isn't it worth a try, even if only in *our* self-interest? Why not give peace a chance?

Richard J. Walton

TURNING THE OTHER CHIC

Seattle, Wash.

Susan Sontag's attack on the left for its alleged lack of sincerity and truthfulness does not work as logic or as fact, but it does suggest a different sort of *trahison de clerc* than the one she purports to reveal.

Let's take her logic first . . . which equates fascism and communism, and seems to define fascism as a sudden and brutal military coup that gives the appearance of being permanent. She predicts that "fascism

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EDITORIALS.

Globaloney

The government of the United States is making a conspicuous fool of itself over Central America. Put aside for the moment the Administration's immorality. Try to eliminate the image of scores of civilians slaughtered every day. Just focus on the stupidity, the self-defeating, stumbling, twisting and turning ineptitude of what this country has been doing there.

In its floundering, the Reagan Administration has even put forth the idea that the troubles of the region are somehow "global," by which it apparently means that they are the creation of the Soviet Union. It is the President's policy, we are told, to avoid the bit-by-bit escalation of the Vietnam sort and, instead, "to deal with this issue as a global problem."

And how does this "global" concept affect Administration policy? On off days it seems to be used to whip up popular support for confrontation and suspicion: if The Russians Are Coming—if they are indeed already in our backyard—then watch out.

But we are also told, sotto voce, "We have to talk to the Russians." At least that is what was said in a background briefing by a personage called "a senior Administration official" in *The New York Times* of March 14 and described in *The Washington Post* of that day as "a senior State Department official." Behind that flimsy camouflage, of course, lurked the figure of Alexander Haig, busily selling out to the godless ones. (If you doubt that identification, consider the following textual evidence from that briefing: "There are discussions that must be held, there are steps that must be taken in political, economic and security areas which tend to influence calculi in Moscow, in Havana, in Nicaragua and in the regional context, and it is a very complex mosaic of interrelated actions which must be consistent,

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credible and hopefully will ultimately bring a successful outcome." Who else could have said that?)

This is truly incredible. The United States seems to be inviting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics into our hemisphere to help put down the revolutions over here. *That* idea is really global. The Monroe Doctrine is overboard. We are asking for help . . . from World Communism, from Evil Russia!

So the United States is acting like the "pitiful, helpless giant" of Nixon's dark fantasies. It is begging for help from the frightful adversaries. We can't cut the Central American mustard by ourselves. Having comically failed to pin the cause of the rebellion in El Salvador on two 19-year-old Nicaraguan students, Haig escalates. On to Havana. On to Moscow.

As anyone with the slightest sense knows, those revolts, rebellions or revolutions south of our border spring from the native soil. They need no fertilizer from abroad, material or ideological. They flourish in a corruption to whose rich compost the United States has contributed heavily. The U.S. Marines ended their occupation of Nicaragua only forty-nine years ago. The plantations they were there to protect remained, with the guns to guard privilege and enforce misery in the hands of the Somozas.

The brightest and best in those small countries are guerrillas. When they win, as they have in Nicaragua, they will become our enemies only if we make them that by supporting the old oppressors.

There are no global risks to the United States in Central America except as our Haigs and Reagans imagine them. As Mexico's President José López Portillo said the other day, "The risk is for Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba," and Nicaragua is building up its arms "because it is afraid of its neighbors and is afraid of the United States."

There is reason for them to be afraid of us and for Americans to fear their own government's mad course in Central America. The best hope may be that the global balloon will burst from its own absurd inflation.

The First Trident

Floating at the dock, any ship is beautiful—even a death ship like the U.S.S. Ohio, the Navy's first Trident submarine. The Ohio was commissioned last November 11 amid pomp, ceremony and some protest, and test-launched its first missile in January. "In her strength lies our safety," said Vice President George Bush at the commissioning, and Secretary of the Navy John Lehman described the Ohio as "deterrence personified."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The $1.2 billion Ohio, like the dozen other Tridents currently planned and the thirty the Navy wants, is a potent first-strike weapon that upsets the balance of nuclear terror. Until 1989, the Ohio will carry Trident 1 missiles with a range of some 4,000 nautical miles, but thereafter it will carry twenty-four Trident 2s equipped with eight to fourteen independent warheads individually capable of striking targets 6,000 nautical miles away. The unprecedented range, accuracy and speed of the Trident 2 missiles, which can reach Soviet targets from virtually anywhere in the world within fifteen minutes, might impel the Russians to fire their vulnerable land-based ICBMs "on warning," thus increasing the danger of a nuclear war by miscalculation.

The Ohio is also a classic example of the follies of our military contracting system. The 560-foot sub was designed and built by General Dynamics' Electric Boat division because its Groton, Connecticut, shipyard is the only facility in the country large enough to handle the Tridents. With this monopoly, Electric Boat was under little pressure to meet the terms of its contract with the Navy, and the Ohio was delivered over two years late and $600 million over budget. Quality-control procedures at Groton were so lax that numerous problems developed, including the use of understrength steel in thousands of locations, faulty welds and shoddy painting. Last May, Adm. Hyman Rickover, the recently retired godfather of the Navy's nuclear submarine program, told a Congressional committee that Electric Boat "doesn't care whether they build horse turds or ships."

During the Ohio's lengthy gestation, Rickover carried on a running battle with the dilatory shipbuilder. In 1980, he pressured the Justice Department to investigate Electric Boat for fraudulently making an artificially low bid. A fierce and sometimes childish war of words ensued, exacerbated when Electric Boat, in a striking display of corporate chutzpah, announced it would claim $100 million in government insurance to cover the costs of repairing the damage that resulted from its own shoddy workmanship. The spat peaked when the company's general manager, P. Takis Veliotis, accused Rickover of endangering the Ohio during a sea trial. The Navy threatened to cancel all contracts, reopen its Mare Island shipyard in California and build the ships there.

But as the Ohio's delivery date approached, calm was restored. Veliotis was transferred within the company, and the shipbuilder "indefinitely suspended" its insurance claims; the Navy promised that Electric Boat would be awarded contracts for the ninth Trident and the next attack sub. In January, Rickover was put out to pasture, and the Justice Department dropped its fraud investigation.

The real victims of Electric Boat's stormy relationship with the Navy were its employees. Layoffs became routine, and 7,000 workers lost their jobs over an eighteen-month period from 1978 to 1980 (40 percent of the labor force in the Groton-New London area is engaged in defense work).

The Electric Boat yard is also the object of a major controversy concerning workplace safety. More than 300 past and present employees have filed lawsuits in Federal courts claiming that they were not adequately protected from exposure to asbestos used for submarine insulation, or warned of its dangers. A study conducted in the mid-1970s found asbestos-related diseases in more than half of the 1,000 Electric Boat workers surveyed; *The New York Times* reports that a Groton physician has treated 500 cases of asbestosis in

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the past three years, all in Electric Boat employees. Ironically, the suits are all directed at Electric Boat's subcontractors and suppliers; the yard itself is exempted from occupational health and safety lawsuits under provisions of the Longshoremen and Harbor Workers Act of 1972.

At the Ohio's commissioning ceremony, Admiral Rickover declared: "No enemy can feel other than fear or terror with this ship at sea." He might have added: "And neither can we."

BRUCE SHAPIRO

Bruce Shapiro, a former Nation *intern, is a reporter for the* Fairfield County Advocate.

Desert Fox

As the April 25 deadline for Israel's final withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula draws near, the true and quite calculating political strategy of Prime Minister Menachem Begin has at last become clear. By creating an unprecedented furor over this territorial compromise, he is making sure that it will be the last one Israel will ever have to make. The harder it is for Israel to return Sinai, the easier it may be for it to resist international pressure to leave the remaining occupied territories.

Begin started by awarding bloated compensation payments to the settlers who are being uprooted from Sinai. Following violent demonstrations in Yamit—the largest Israeli town on the peninsula—and threats that "blood would flow" if the compensation checks were unsatisfactory, Begin railroaded through his Cabinet a 20 percent increase in the awards, to a total of more than $280 million. At the time, Finance Minister Yoram Aridor complained bitterly that his budget-cutting measures were severely undermined by the generous handout. And public support of Begin's move was not enhanced by a Finance Ministry report that it would take the average Israeli family forty years to accumulate the money earmarked for each family in Yamit.

Next, Begin seems to have encouraged—or at least not effectively dampened—dissension in the Knesset. He has been attacked by his former allies in the ultranationalist Techiya Party as well as by his coalition partners in the National Religious Party, and has done nothing to confront that opposition head-on. And after former Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Chaim Druckman, a member of the N.R.P., returned from a trip to the United States seeking American Jewish support for the Stop the Withdrawal Movement ("I can tell you that the withdrawal should and will be halted"), he received only a rather mild rebuke from Begin.

Finally, Begin has done little to discourage the hard-core squatters, mainly religious, who have occupied abandoned houses and refused to leave. Although they will be a menace to the Israeli soldiers who will have to drag them out, Begin left the road to Yamit open until late February. The Israeli utilities provided the squatters with free water and electricity, and the Ministry of Education provided their children with schooling.

A further sign that Begin will use the Sinai evacuation as a pretext for holding on to the remaining territories came earlier this month, when he and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon accepted "in principle" Education Minister Zevulon Hammer's proposal that for every settlement evacuated from Sinai, a new one would be built on the West Bank. As Begin is well aware, it will be much more difficult to evacuate the 25,000 West Bank residents, most of whom are deeply religious, than it was to evacuate the 4,000 less ideological Sinai settlers.

For now, it seems that the Begin strategy will work. The Prime Minister may have temporarily alienated the right by giving up Sinai, and alienated the left by refusing to crack down earlier on the squatters, but he is in a perfect position to keep his favorite piece of real estate, the West Bank. As the Israeli Army descends on Yamit next month, the television cameras will start rolling, and the world will see the heavy price Israel is paying for peace. What the cameras won't show, however, are the many ways Begin contributed to the furor.

NEIL BARSKY

Neil Barsky is editor of the Jewish Student Press Service.

Harvard Square

In keeping with the principles put forth by the chief architect of the Reagan domestic program—Horatio Alger, of course—Treasury Secretary Donald Regan recently testified on the Hill that from now on college students would be expected to go to work to raise money for their tuition. "I hate to seem old-fashioned and sort of square," he said, obviously not the slightest bit discomposed, "but there is a thing called working your way through school. I did it. It ain't easy, but you can do it."

We wish to take nothing away from the hard-working Regan—not even his homey little solecism—but it does seem fair to point out that times have changed a bit since he picked up his sheepskin. From 1936 to 1940, the years Regan attended Harvard, the tuition was $400, which represented only about a fifth of the median family income at that time. Nowadays a year in the Yard costs $8,195, nearly 40 percent of the current median family income; when room and board is added in, the bite is closer to 60 percent. Moreover, though it is true of course that the median income has gone up over those years, it has increased by approximately 1,000 percent; Harvard tuition costs, however, have gone up by 2,048 percent.

This thing called working your way through school has never been easy, but it is considerably more difficult now. Indeed, the good Secretary has had a hand in making it more difficult. We now have an unemployment rate of nearly 9 percent in this country—which figures to go higher in the months to come—and not only Harvard students but Harvard *graduates* are having their troubles finding jobs.

Things ain't what they used to be.

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CALVIN TRILLIN

I suppose you've heard by now that I had the gout. Everybody seems to know. No, I don't want to hear about your grandfather's gout. With the possible exception of your grandmother, nobody is less interested in hearing about your grandfather than I am. No, gout does not make people ill tempered. I have nothing against your grandfather—although I must admit that even before the onset of my own affliction, stories concerning the inflammation of his joints would not have been high on my list of compelling narratives. The reason I'm adamant right now about not wanting to discuss your grandfather is that the association of gout with grandfathers—particularly grandfathers who look like Charles Laughton—is symptomatic of a view of gout that we gout sufferers consider a very large pain in the foot.

Don't deny it. Charles Laughton is precisely the sort of person you had in mind. I know that from the smile my wife had on her face when she guessed that I might have the gout—after having dismissed, without anything approaching a scientific inquiry, my theory that I might be suffering from the effects of a tarantula bite. I heard that Charles Laughton echo in the voice of my doctor, who took one look at my foot and said, "Looks like a touch of the gout, old boy." I know the picture he had in his mind: some bloated old Tory sunk into a leather armchair in a musty gentlemen's club, resting one foot on a gout-stool as he tries to maneuver the other foot into position to kick at a passing waiter. Don't tell me: You were just about to say that gout is the disease of the rich and distinguished. I know what you really mean. You really mean that people who have the gout are rich enough to guzzle vintage port and distinguished by a tendency to let cigar ashes dribble onto their vests as they doze off in the middle of the afternoon. Don't deny it.

Your attitude is the reason I decided that there had to be a serious effort to re-educate the public on the subject of gout—which, of course, is not the name our affliction will go by once the re-education effort is in high gear.

"We need to come up with a new name," I told my wife. "Maybe something that sounds breezy, like the names they use these days for new brands of cigarettes."

"How about Glutton's Syndrome?" my wife said.

I explained to her that according to modern medical theory gout is more likely to have to do with heredity than with diet—although just to be safe I have always steered clear of mung beans and broccoli. Then it occurred to me that we might name the disease after one or another of its most renowned sufferers, such as Dr. Samuel Johnson—the eighteenth-century literary figure, not the oral surgeon.

"What about calling it Johnson's Disease?" I asked.

"That's a dumb name," she said. "People will think it's named after Lyndon Johnson. They'll think the symptoms include a mad compulsion to bomb Orientals."

Dumb! I wasn't going to bring this up, but, as it happens, studies suggest a correlation between Dr. Johnson's Disease (formerly gout) and high intelligence. Name three dummies who have ever had Dr. Johnson's Disease. See! The re-education campaign is in high gear already.

In planning the campaign, I got off on the wrong foot—a phrase, I must say, that still makes me wince, even though some little pills the doctor gave me cleared up my symptoms (or coincided with the gradual neutralizing of the tarantula venom I had absorbed). The false association of gout with the Blimps had made me obsessed with distinguishing the sort of people who actually do get Dr. Johnson's Disease (Galileo, for instance, and Richard the Lionhearted) from the sort of people who don't. Roy Cohn, the New York Bar's best-known limousine-chaser, had just thrown the annual birthday celebration that I have always thought of as the Foxhole Party, since it brings together all of the most prominent people you wouldn't want to have in the next foxhole, and I became preoccupied with proving that the sort of people who contract Dr. Johnson's Disease would not be in attendance. As a public service, the *Soho News*, of blessed memory, usually had a reporter on hand at the Foxhole Party to note the names of guests as they arrived—the way the F.B.I. stations someone at the cemetery to check out the mourners at a mob funeral—and I was poring over the list when my wife told me I was wasting my time trying to prove that no sufferer of Dr. Johnson's Disease would attend a party held at a disco.

"That little jig that Hitler danced when he heard about the fall of France would have been impossible for a man with Dr. Johnson's Disease," I informed her.

"I think you need professional help," she said.

I tried to get some from a friend in the public relations business. He suggested that we build a campaign around television commercials featuring Bruce Jenner, the decathlon champion, and have as our first big fund-raiser a benefit performance of that new film *I'm Dancing as Fast as I Can*. The commercials would show Jenner just barely outrunning and outjumping some beach-boy type, and would then cut to the locker room, where Jenner says to the beach boy, "Hey, you're not bad for a guy with the gout."

"We call it Dr. Johnson's Disease, or D. J. D., these days, Bruce," the beach boy says, with diction that makes it obvious he is not a beach boy but maybe an associate professor of classics. "And with proper medication, people who suffer from it can lead full and productive lives."

You can be assured that I rejected that campaign out of hand. I don't want people to think that those of us who have D. J. D. do not suffer. We want respect, sure, but not at the cost of losing sympathy. D. J. D. hurts. Sometimes, I had to keep my foot up on a stool. Sometimes, I got, well, out of sorts, which you would get too if your foot hurt and you weren't allowed any wine as long as you were taking little pills. Sometimes, what bothered me most about my foot hurting was that I couldn't use it to drop-kick a cat. Sometimes the medication made me doze off. You suspected as much, didn't you? Don't deny it.

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ARTICLES.

MEASURING PRODUCTIVITY

The Economists' New Clothes

HARRY MAGDOFF

The American people have been sold a bill of goods on the question of productivity. The purported sluggish growth or actual decline of productivity has been put forward ad nauseam as a key explanation of what is wrong with the U.S. economy. But do we really know how to measure productivity—and if we did, would that tell us anything fundamental about the nature of the economy itself? The answer is a resounding no.

Economists began to try to measure the nation's productivity many years ago, thinking this information was needed for the models and formulas that are supposed to explain how the economy works. But since the data required for such a calculation simply did not exist, a makeshift measure was devised which, though at best a convenient fiction, enabled the economists to continue playing their games. It wasn't long, of course, before they started treating this statistical fiction as if it represented something real and significant. And then, by constant repetition and widespread publicity, the contrived measure became a myth that was generally accepted by the public—a myth that now serves both to obscure the actual causes of stagflation and to support propaganda for corporate tax relief and a reduction in real wages.

The basic fallacy of the official productivity measure is that it combines two disparate types of activity: labor that makes goods and labor that provides services. Measuring the first kind of productivity makes some sense, but measuring the second kind makes no sense at all. And combining these two calculations into a single index of national productivity creates a mishmash.

Measuring the production of goods is fairly simple. Changes in the quantity of output from year to year are compared with changes in the input of labor to find out whether more or less labor is required to produce a given product. Frequently this entails only an elementary exercise in arithmetic. Thus, if on the average one worker produced 1,000 pencils an hour in 1979 and 1,100 an hour in 1980, we can say that labor productivity in pencil manufacturing increased 10 percent between those two years. Even for more complex types of production, in which elements as diverse as microchips and heavy machinery are combined, it is possible to arrive at a plausible measure of productivity—as long as the quantities of output can be added up.

Harry Magdoff, co-editor of Monthly Review, *is co-author with Paul Sweezy of* The Deepening Crisis of U.S. Capitalism *(Monthly Review Press).*

But the majority of employees in America work in service industries where the volume of output either cannot be measured or is not a significant indicator of the service performed. How can one measure the output and productivity of a violinist in a symphony orchestra, a computer programmer, a copywriter for an advertising agency, a biologist, a waiter in a luxury restaurant, a travel agent or an undertaker? Is the productivity of a nurse who is responsible for the care of fifty patients in a hospital ward greater than that of a nurse who attends to only ten patients? Is a university professor who teaches a class of thirty students to be regarded as less productive than one who lectures to a class of five hundred?

It should be obvious that for most services measuring a quantity of output is either meaningless, imaginary or impossible. The reason is simple: quality cannot be translated into quantity, and differences in quality are of the essence when it comes to providing services in medicine, education, entertainment, law, accounting, advertising, finance and similar occupations.

How then do the designers of the official productivity statistics cope with this dilemma? They use the market as their guide. Money—the price of goods and services in the marketplace—is assumed to be the universal solvent by which all differences in quality are reduced to quantitative terms. Therefore, the economists take the net dollar value of all nongovernmental goods and services, adjusted for price changes, to represent the quantity of output of the entire private economy, service sector as well as manufacturing sector. Then they compare that set of numbers with the number of hours of labor expended in any given period and, lo and behold, we have the national productivity measurement endlessly reported by the press.

These statistical procedures are flawed not simply because

OFFICIAL WISDOM

"Unless this decline can be reversed, and unless productivity can be accelerated to the levels being achieved by West Germany and Japan, it is only a question of time until we slip into relative backwardness."
—Lester C. Thurow, *The Zero-Sum Society*

"Lagging investment depresses productivity growth, raising business costs and giving another boost to inflation. Many American industries are losing their international competitiveness; jobs are being lost to imports."
—*Newsweek*, "The Economy in Crisis," January 19, 1981

"No matter what the business, the name of the game is productivity. And America is getting beaten at its own game. . . . [We propose] a new national pastime—higher productivity."
—From a television advertisement by W. R. Grace & Co.

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noncomparable sectors are compared. They are also misleading because, given the vagaries of the marketplace, they can hardly be expected to provide an accurate reflection of what the labor force really produces. Orthodox economists argue that the market, as a result of the inexorable workings of competition and supply and demand, brings about an equal exchange between buyers and sellers and so indicates ultimately the quantity and quality of a particular good or service. But such notions of a "free" economy and equal exchange belong to a dream world that never existed. In reality, wage, price and profit differences are greatly influenced by past events, tradition, monopolistic practices, institutional restrictions and wide discrepancies of power. Since the money value of output reflects these diverse factors, it is obviously a wholly unsuitable way to measure labor's output.

Two examples can illustrate the point. Take first the fact that average hourly earnings of "nonsupervisory workers in eating and drinking places" are half those of production workers in manufacturing industries, a wage differential which will influence the quantity of output used in measuring productivity. But does this wage difference really mean that manufacturing employees produce twice as much per hour as restaurant workers—or that restaurateurs are able to take advantage of a large supply of women, blacks and Hispanics who can't find better jobs? Next consider an example at the other extreme. A doctor in private practice earning $100,000 a year decides to give up his practice for a $50,000-a-year job with a university hospital. Using market value as a guide to output, we would have to say that the doctor's productivity has decreased 50 percent, though in fact he may be "producing" as much or more.

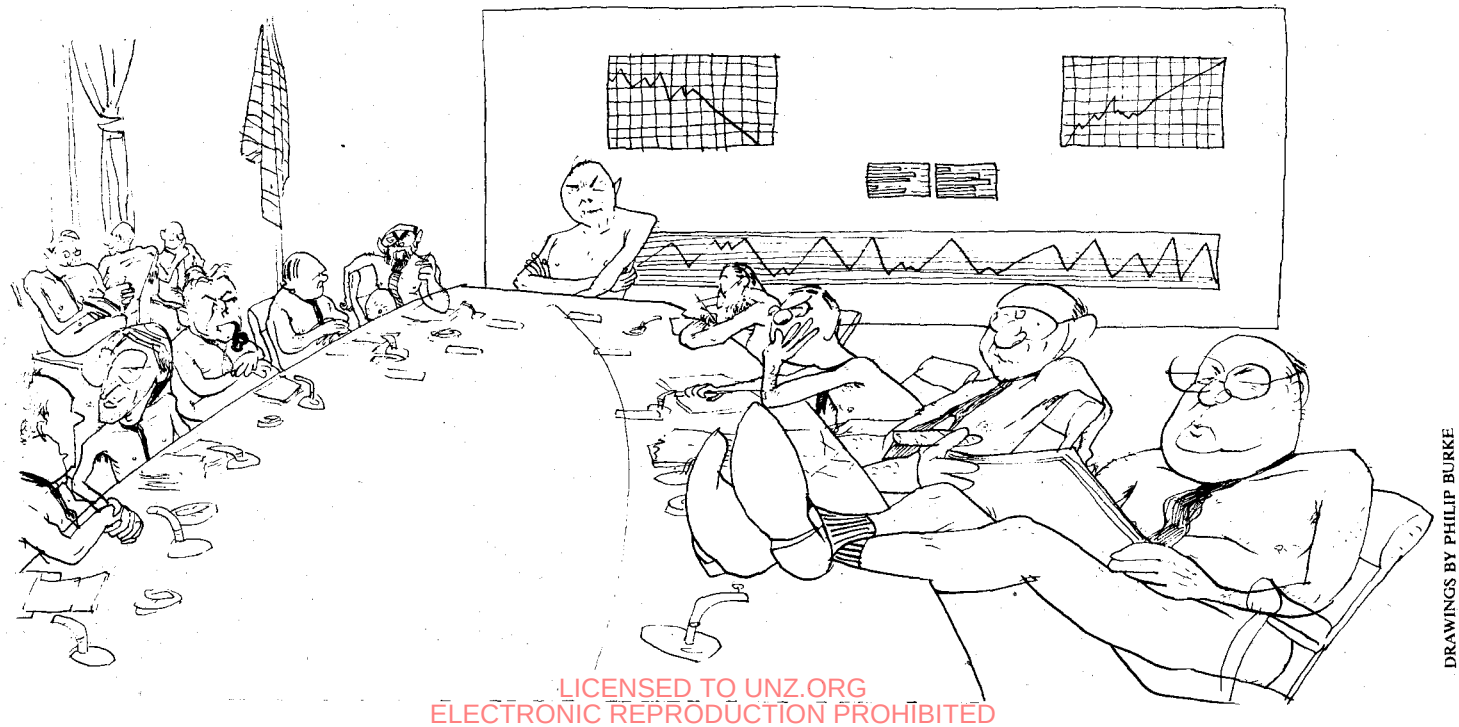
But it is not merely on theoretical grounds that the official measurements of productivity are misleading. They also fail to reflect the realities of the American economy as we know them from other indices.

For example, when the supposed decline in productivity is mentioned in the press, the popular assumption is that this pertains mainly to America's manufacturing industry. But the fact is that productivity in manufacturing advanced significantly in the past decade. The Federal Reserve Board's measure of manufacturing production (a weighted index reflecting the quantity of output) registered a growth of 38 percent between 1970 and 1980, while the number of production workers in manufacturing rose by only 1.4 percent.

Moreover, the lumped-together productivity statistics do not reveal the major shift that took place in the American labor force over the last decade, as reflected in the accompanying table. What that table also suggests, though less obviously, is that productivity in goods production—and this is primarily in manufacturing and agriculture—is so high that the United States can support this vast expansion of the service sector. Of course many service activities are necessary and socially useful, but it is also true that many of them—advertising, promotion, public relations and much else—would fall into the category of what Thorsten Veblen called "the wasteful occupations." The table also indicates, more ominously, that the significant growth in jobs in the last decade has not been able to prevent a rise in unemployment, suggesting that if productivity had been even higher in

	1970	1980	Change from 1970 to 1980	
Employed	Million	Million	Million	Percent
Goods production	31.6	34.2	+ 2.6	8.2%
Services	30.2	43.5	+ 13.2	44.0%
Government	12.6	16.2	+ 3.7	28.6%
Unemployed	4.1	7.4	+ 3.3	80.5%

"Goods production" includes agriculture, manufacturing, mining, construction, transportation and public utilities; "services" covers wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance, real estate and business and personal services; "government" includes Federal, state and local employees. Unemployment data are the official numbers, which don't take into account those people who are discouraged from looking for work and those who are involuntarily working only part time.



DRAWINGS BY PHILIP BURKE

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goods production—presumably the goal that the official economists are seeking—the result would have been even more unemployment.

The lesson would seem to be clear. It is in the nature of advanced capitalism, under the guidance of the profit motive, to neglect the enormous potential production of goods and services needed for a better and more secure life and to devote more and more energy to such pursuits as redundant distribution, sales promotion, finance, tax avoidance, merger activity, speculation and the like. The economic troubles of our society, in short, have very little to do with productivity and very much to do with the misallocation and waste of productive resources and effort. □

TOMAHAWK MISSILES

The Pentagon On the Warpath

ROBERT C. ALDRIDGE

Since the SALT II protocol limiting the range of cruise missiles to 372 miles expired last year, it comes as no great surprise that the Pentagon is now preparing to deploy a new generation of cruise missiles with ranges of up to 1,500 miles. Not only is this development likely to hopelessly foul future arms-reduction talks, but it may even propel the Pentagon toward an American "first-strike" capability that would present a real threat of nuclear war.

Three types of Tomahawk cruise missiles are now in the final stages of production, and the Navy is already prepared to deploy an antiship version with a conventional warhead this year. A land-attack model is scheduled to be ready about the same time, and a long-range strategic Tomahawk with a 200-kiloton nuclear warhead will be operational by 1984, if not sooner.

The Tomahawk missile is a small jet airplane, 21 inches in diameter and just 18 feet long, that is flown by sensors and an automatic pilot rather than by a human being. The entire navigation package is smaller than a breadbox and weighs less than 100 pounds. The long-range strategic Tomahawk is designed to fly at about 20,000 feet for as long as possible at about half the speed of sound; that's considered a slow speed for a missile, but it provides the best fuel economy and thus a longer range. The missile is propelled after launch by a 30-inch-long rocket motor which separates once the missile has achieved the programmed speed and altitude, at which point a small fanjet engine (144 pounds, 12 inches by 36.9 inches) takes over and the wings and tail unfold. If launched from a submarine, the rocket ignites underwater and points the missile toward the surface at the desired angle.

An inertial guidance system controlling the automatic pilot is updated periodically during the flight by a sensor called TERCOM (for "terrain contour matching"). TERCOM can follow a premapped route with such accuracy—deadly accuracy, one might say—that the missile is capable of destroying small and virtually inaccessible targets. By comparing what it sees with a computerized map, TERCOM is able to correct any deviation from the prescribed course. When the missile reaches enemy territory, TERCOM guides it to fly at tree-top height so that it can escape detection by radar sensors; and even if it is picked up on a radar scope, the Tomahawk looks like a seagull. When it is within fifty miles of its target, the missile sinks still lower to skim the surface by a mere fifty feet while speeding up to Mach 0.7 for the final dash.

Current Navy plans are to install cruise missiles on thirty destroyers and twenty-two cruisers, but eventually most warships will be equipped to carry them. At first the Tomahawks will be carried in armored box-launchers that fire at a slight angle and can hold only four missiles, but in 1985 a new launcher that stores and fires vertically will enable ships to carry from thirty to three hundred missiles. The Navy hopes to restore two mothballed battleships—the New Jersey and the Iowa—to carry cruise missiles, and with vertical launchers in place of gun turrets they will be able to carry up to 300 Tomahawks each.

At least ninety fast-attack submarines will also be loaded with cruise missiles, since Tomahawks can be launched from the torpedo tubes the subs are now equipped with. The early-model subs will carry only a few Tomahawks in their torpedo rooms because they need to store other weapons as well to carry out other missions. The new Los Angeles-class subs, however, will be modified so that they can carry twelve vertical launchers in their ballast compartments (which are forward of the conning tower and outside the pressure hull), and those that are slated for delivery in 1985-86 have been designed with this twelve-tube missile compartment in place.

Much of the discussion in the media recently has focused on the 464 ground-launched Tomahawk missiles, which, along with 108 Pershing 2 ballistic missiles, are part of the so-called "theater nuclear force" modernization that the Pentagon wants the NATO countries to undertake beginning in 1983. According to this scheme, mobile Tomahawks equipped with selectable-yield nuclear warheads could be targeted to reach all Warsaw Pact countries from as far away as Britain and most of western Russia from closer European launch pads, a capability that threatens 40 percent of the Soviet population and most of its industry.

The prospect of deploying these missiles has already aroused strong resistance in several NATO countries, and it is far from certain whether grass-roots political pressure there will allow the Pentagon to carry out such an elaborate

Robert C. Aldridge, an aerospace engineer, worked sixteen years for Lockheed helping to design Polaris missiles, the MIRVs for Poseidons and a maneuvering warhead for Trident SLBMs. He is the author of two books: The Counterforce Syndrome *(Institute for Policy Studies) and* First Strike *(TBS-Britannica, Tokyo).*

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WOMEN'S APPEAL FOR JUSTICE
— IN CHATTANOOGA —

In April, 1980, four elderly Black women were gunned down on the streets of Chattanooga, Tennessee. They were injured when shots were fired from a car carrying three members of the "Justice Knights" of the Ku Klux Klan.

Viola Ellison, Lela Evans, Opal Jackson and Katherine Johnson were all wounded by the shotgun blasts. A fifth woman, Fannie Crumsey, was injured by flying glass during the unprovoked attack.

Three months later, an all-white jury declared that two of the Klansmen were innocent. A third, Marshall Thrash, was sentenced to nine months in jail and served three months on a minor assault charge.

This was the outcome of a state court prosecution despite the fact that it was undenied that the trio attended a Klan meeting together, picked up cross-burning materials, went to the home of one of them and picked up two shotguns, drove into the heart of Chattanooga's Black community, set a cross afire, drove around and returned, at which point these shots were fired from their car. At the trial, one of them admitted to firing the shots.

As WOMEN, we refuse to countenance terrorists who, purporting to "protect white womanhood," shoot down Black women, assault Black life and target those others who stand for social justice.

As MOTHERS, we pledge to educate our children to stand up against the vicious racism that the Klan represents.

As CITIZENS, we support these courageous women and their civil suit to win judgement against the Klan. And most urgently, we DEMAND that the U.S. Justice Department immediately begin federal criminal prosecutions of those responsible for those and other violent Klan actions under existing Civil Rights and Anti-Klan statutes.

We urge you to add your name to the roll call of women who oppose these assaults, scare tactics and racism of the Ku Klux Klan and similar hate groups.

Lauren Anderson-*National Conference of Black Lawyers;* Joan Baez; Ella J. Baker; Beryle Banfield-*President, Council on Interracial Books for Children;* Unita Blackwell-Wilson-*Mayor, Mayersville, Mississippi;* Anne Braden-*Co-Chair, Southern Organizing Committee for Social & Economic Justice;* Professor Denise S. Carty-Bennia-*Northeastern University of Law;* Judy Claude-*National Ministries, American Baptist Churches;* Ruby Dee-*Actress and Writer;* Barbara Deming-*Writer and Poet;* Jan Douglass-*Executive Director, Community Relations Commission City of Atlanta;* Carol Downer-*Feminist Women's Health Center, Los Angeles;* Janice Fine-*Chair, United States Student Association;* Marjorie Fine-*Coordinator, Reproductive Rights National Network;* Roberta Flack; Dorothy Height-*President, National Council of Negro Women;* Coretta Scott King; Jaqueline Levine-*Chair, Governing Council American Jewish Congress;* Evelyn Lowery-*President, SCLC/WOMEN;* Hilda Mason-*Councilwoman, District of Columbia;* Joyce Miller-*President, Coalition of Labor Union Women;* Vivian Jenkins Nelsen-*American Lutheran Church;* Karen Nussbaum-*President, WORKING WOMEN;* Consuelo U. Packer-*Women's Division, United Methodist Church;* Bernice Johnson Reagon-*Cultural Worker, Singer, Historian;* Patsy Simms-*Author, THE KLAN;* Eleanor Smeal-*President, National Organization of Women;* Addie L. Wyatt

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buildup. The United States is ready, however, to circumvent that resistance by placing the cruise missiles on submarines or surface ships—virtually the same weapon with virtually the same capability—just as it was prepared, after signing the atmospheric test-ban treaty in 1963, to begin an even more ambitious series of underground nuclear tests. Significantly, the Defense Department's 1982 annual report is careful to point out that nuclear weapons limitation talks with the Russians are supposed to address only land-based systems.

The more important point, however, is that any talks with the Russians about theater nuclear weapons are already effectively sabotaged by the prospect of widespread deployment of the Tomahawk missiles. For one thing, verification of their numbers—or even of their existence—is nearly impossible, because the nonnuclear missiles are identical to the nuclear ones from the outside and can be mounted interchangeably in the launchers. They are also so small they can be hidden on submarines, on surface ships and even in trucks on land. Moreover, because they are, in Pentagonian terms, so cheap to produce and can be turned out in large numbers, they represent a significant threat to the current nuclear proliferation standoff.

The most dangerous aspect of the Tomahawk missiles, though, is their likely contribution to American planning for a first-strike capability against the Soviet Union, the most dangerous provocation for nuclear war yet devised. The Pentagon, while acknowledging the great precision of the cruise missiles, maintains that they would not be useful in a first-strike strategy because they are too slow and take too long to reach their targets. Nevertheless, there are two ways in which the cruise missile could play an important first-strike role.

First, cruise missiles might be vital in attacking Soviet missile silos. If the Russians were successful in creating "cold-launch" missiles—which do not need hot booster rockets to get started and hence do not destroy the silos from which they are propelled—they would be able to use their silos over and over again, responding to an initial American attack with a series of retaliatory strikes. The cruise missiles, however, no matter how slow, could be used to penetrate Soviet defenses and destroy the silos before they could be reloaded, thus freeing the far faster and more versatile intercontinental missiles for other offensive tasks.

Second, cruise missiles might be useful in avoiding the risks of what in military jargon is called "fratricide"—the neutralization of one's own missiles from electromagnetic pulses set off in a warhead when it passes through an atmosphere ionized by a previous nuclear explosion. In any first strike that created such an ionized atmosphere in the higher altitudes, cruise missiles traveling low and at subsonic speeds would be considerably less susceptible to such neutralization and could be used to reach the Soviet silos.

There has been a tendency in some quarters to shrug off the cruise missile as an impotent weapon of war because it is so slow. On the contrary, it is a serious and dangerous new weapon whose impending deployment represents a devastating escalation of the arms race. □

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AN UNWORKABLE ASIAN POLICY

Making Vietnam 'Feel Pain'

DON LUCE

American policy toward Vietnam is based on the idea of isolating and weakening that country in every possible way. In the words of John Holdridge, Assistant Secretary of State for Pacific and East Asian Affairs, the United States wants to make the Vietnamese "feel pain" through "maximum political and economic pressure." Not only is this short-sighted and inhumanitarian—it isn't even working.

The United States has had success, right enough, in making the Vietnamese "feel pain." It has refused to contribute to Vietnam's request for 384,000 tons of cereals to feed 10 million people—despite the Food and Agriculture Organization's assurances that the food "will be used effectively and will reach intended beneficiaries"—and has lobbied other countries not to contribute. It threatened a veto of a World Food Program agricultural project for Vietnam, forcing a delay in the vote on that project for a year. And it forced the European Economic Community into a decision to stop sending 15,000 tons a year of dried milk, oats and oil to children's hospitals in Vietnam.

The U.S. government has even tried to prohibit private humanitarian agencies in this country from sending relief supplies to Indochina. In May the Commerce Department refused to grant a license to the Mennonite Central Committee to send 250 tons of wheat to Vietnam; the department eventually backed down only because of pressure by politicians from Kansas, where the wheat was coming from.

The result of such policies—together with lingering war damage and the worst floods Vietnam has experienced for fifty years—is that food supplies are extremely short and millions are hungry and undernourished. According to a 1981 World Bank report, Vietnam has only 83 percent of the food its people need to meet minimum nutritional requirements to sustain normal activity. And it is the poor, of course, and particularly the children, who suffer most: by international standards, about 20 percent of Vietnam's children would be considered malnourished.

But despite all of this—this infliction of real "pain" upon the Vietnamese—none of the major objectives of U.S. policy in Indochina are being met. Far from it.

Reduction of Soviet influence. America's support of China and its refusal to use diplomatic influence to try to forestall China's February 1979 invasion of Vietnam has predictably thrown the Vietnamese into the Soviet embrace. The Vietnamese have given the Russians valuable military footholds at the Cam Ranh and Da Nang bases and per-

Don Luce, who visited Vietnam and Cambodia in 1981, is with the Southeast Asia Resource Center.

WRITERS CONGRESS RECORD

Librarians and Censorship

"The concept of intellectual freedom serves as the very foundation of American librarianship and distinguishes it from librarianship practiced elsewhere. That concept . . . is under siege today. . . .

"The growth of this siege has been documented by the most extensive study undertaken to date on selection practices and censorship pressures affecting books and other materials in the classrooms and libraries of our nation's public schools. The survey was published on July 31, 1981, under the title Limiting What Students Shall Read: Books and Other Learning Materials in the Public Schools: How They Are Selected and How They Are Removed. *Co-sponsored by the Association of American Publishers, the American Library Association and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the two-part survey collected data from 1,891 public elementary and secondary school administrators and librarians, and from twenty-one of the twenty-two administrators in textbook-adoption states.*

"The report documents that 'censorship pressures on books and other learning materials in the public schools are real, nationwide and growing,' and it demonstrates that the challenges to books, magazines and films occurred in all regions of the country and in all types and sizes of communities on a fairly consistent basis. . . . Survey responses of local-level librarians and administrators indicated:

- *The local media reported only 15 percent of the challenges. . . .*
- *In 95 percent of the incidents reported, the complainants sought to limit, rather than expand, the information and viewpoints in the materials used.*
- *More than 75 percent of the challenges were initiated by an individual; in slightly less than half of these challenges, the [complaints] cited sex, sexuality, obscenity and/or objectionable language as the reason for the complaint.*
- *In half of the specific challenges, the material was altered, restricted or removed* prior *to a formal review.*
- *In more than half of the responses, the final disposition of the incident was that some degree of restriction or censorship was ultimately imposed on the challenged materials."*

—Robert Doyle, Assistant to the Director,
Office for Intellectual Freedom,
American Library Association,
American Writers Congress, October 9-12, 1981.

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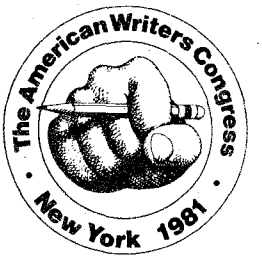
AMERICAN WRITERS CONGRESS POSTERS



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mitted the upgrading of other facilities left behind by the United States, and they have relied on the Russians for considerable military support in doubling their army to its present strength of 1.1 million men.

Strengthening the ASEAN alliance. In an attempt to beef up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which has replaced the SEATO alliance, the United States has instead sown discord. Nations such as Thailand and Singapore have actively sought to create and aid an anti-Vietnamese opposition in Cambodia, while Indonesia and Malaysia tend to view China as a greater threat to peace. And the Philippine government, fearful of getting caught in the middle, is working ardently for neutrality by all outsiders; as Carlos Romulo, the Philippine Foreign Minister, said at a recent ASEAN conference, "ASEAN has no wish to be drawn into these conflicts."

Withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. The Vietnamese would obviously rather carry on their fight against the forces of Pol Pot, whom they fear as being pro-Chinese, on foreign soil, and that is why they keep some 200,000 troops in Cambodia. Ironically, this is probably welcomed by a majority of the Cambodians, who hope the Vietnamese will stay until the threat of a renewal of Pol Pot's bloody purges disappears. And yet the United States has done nothing to influence China to lessen support for the Pol Pot forces, and Son Sann, who is the figure the United States has been generally supporting as an alternative to Pol Pot, seems to have no significant power base in Cambodia.

The failures of current U.S. policy would seem to be glaringly obvious, but the Reagan Administration appears to be unwilling to budge. Just last summer, Secretary of State Alexander Haig told a U.N. conference on Cambodia, "We will continue to question seriously any economic assistance to Vietnam, from whatever source." And Assistant Secretary Holdridge went so far as to declare, "We will seek, if we can, to find ways to increase the political, economic and, yes, military pressures on Vietnam."

If the United States is serious about wishing to achieve stability and peace in Indochina—even if it wishes to achieve the stated goals of its policy on Vietnam—it will have to revamp its strategy. At a minimum the United States should normalize diplomatic relations with Vietnam, take it off the "enemies list" so that customary trade can begin and provide reconstruction aid and repatriation assistance for Indochinese refugees. It would also be desirable to try to involve the United Nations in settling the Cambodian conflict, perhaps by establishing an empty seat for Cambodia in the world body and working toward an eventual U.N. peacekeeping force. Finally, the United States might try to help establish a demilitarized zone between Cambodia and Thailand as well as a reduction of the Chinese Army force on the Vietnamese border, both of which might be held out in exchange for a promise of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops.

Clearly such a policy would be more generous and more humanitarian than our present strategy. It would also stand a far better chance of working. ☐

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THE VOCABULARY OF CRIME

Behind the War Metaphor

STEPHEN GILLERS

This article is not about crime. It is about how government talks about crime, about the vocabulary of crime. I recently testified for the American Civil Liberties Union in opposition to a Senate bill (S. 653) that would severely limit the ability of a state prisoner to challenge in Federal court the constitutional fairness of his trial. Such a challenge is made by filing what the legal trade calls "a petition for a writ of *habeas corpus*," which is nothing more than a prisoner asking a Federal judge to decide whether a state court honored his constitutional rights.

In preparing my testimony, I read much of what President Reagan and the Justice Department have been saying about crime, and I became intrigued with the language and images used. These are instructive in themselves, but I also found it illuminating to test the imagery against statistics, which was possible in the case of *habeas corpus*.

Consider Attorney General William French Smith's statement last October 23 to the Senate Subcommittee on Criminal Law. Crime is four times called a "menace." It is described as something we must "fight against." It is said to have reached "alarming proportions" and to confront us with "crises" requiring "action" or even "vigorous action." We are told we need a "coordinated national strategy" and "to remove inefficiencies that plague the criminal justice system." In the areas of organized crime and drug trafficking, we are said to need even more. We need "a truly powerful weapon." To protect ourselves from "criminal attacks," we must recognize that we have "become timid and reluctant to assert vigorously our rights." We must "take action immediately." Only then can we "restore the balance between the forces of law and the forces of lawlessness."

The Reagan Administration is not the first to use the war metaphor to defend what it would like its law enforcers to be empowered to do about crime. While one may bemoan a lack of imagination, the imagery does serve the government's purpose. As with war, there is an enemy to fight. As with war, defeat means the end of America as we know it. As with war, we must not quibble about whether the army (the police) is too aggressive, given the consequences should the enemy (the "forces of lawlessness") prevail. This imagery enables the government to make quick, dramatic arguments for the implementation of its programs. Because the vocabulary is strong, it necessarily denies the presence of nuances or subtlety. It is intended to deny their presence.

The war metaphor permits an additional manipulation of a kind George Orwell surely would have appreciated. By depicting only two sides—"the forces of law and the forces of lawlessness"—it implies that contrary views necessarily assist the other side. Since this is war, the other side must be the enemy, and the word for those who aid the enemy in time of war is "traitor." Am I pushing the analogy too far?

Sadly, no. White House counselor Edwin Meese 3d came near to this characterization last May when he called the A.C.L.U. part of a "criminals' lobby" that made law enforcement difficult. And William Wilson, a University of California Regent who is a friend of the President's, charged in the same week that it was logical to conclude that the A.C.L.U. was "supported by . . . organized crime." Given the war analogy, we can understand how logic may lead to that conclusion.

A war metaphor for crime can be criticized linguistically or philosophically, but it cannot be disproved empirically. With regard to *habeas corpus*, however, the imagery was different, and my research in preparing my testimony gave me an opportunity to assess its accuracy. State prisoner petitions for Federal *habeas corpus* relief, the Attorney General told the Senate Subcommittee on Criminal Law, "continue to flood the courts." This "unending" flood was "undermining" the "greatest single deterrent to crime, swift and sure punishment," as state prisoners engage in a "ceaseless effort to set aside their convictions." The legislation the Attorney General envisions would close the floodgates or, in the real world, the Federal courthouse door.

The Attorney General's remarks create the incidental misapprehension that state convicts escape "punishment" through the tactic of filing "ceaseless" *habeas* petitions. In fact, in virtually every case, the state defendants are litigating from their prison cells. But never mind that. Let us look instead behind the image the Attorney General used.

Is there a flood? That we can test. The statistics show that at most there is a trickle, perhaps merely a drip. Only 3.5 percent of the cases filed in Federal courts in the year ending June 1980 were brought by state prisoners seeking release. About 1 percent of all Federal trials involved *habeas corpus* pleas (199 out of 19,585). Since most such cases take a day or less to try, not even one quarter of 1 percent of all trial days were devoted to *habeas* cases in this period. The Attorney General did not mention these numbers in his statement to the Senate subcommittee. "I will not burden you with the statistics," he said. No wonder. How much more persuasive it is to speak of "floods" than fractions of a percent.

None of this is to deny that crime is a serious problem in need of government attention or that *habeas* petitions do create work for the judiciary. But the real battle, if there is one, is not between the forces of law and the forces of lawlessness. Nor is it among those whose differing views lead them to different solutions. It is rather a battle to stop the use of language to distort what it pretends to describe. Thirty-five years ago, George Orwell wrote that the "great enemy of clear language is insincerity." He concluded that

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political language is "designed to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." He accepted that "one cannot change this all in a moment," but thought the situation "probably curable." I doubt he still would. □

THE 'WINDOW OF VULNERABILITY'

What It Really Means to Push The Arms Race

KERRY O'BANION

The response so far to the Reagan Administration's program to "rearm" America has focused largely on the impact such a huge diversion of resources would have on the poor and on the economy in general. Yet, as inhumane as the Reagan budget is and as deleterious to the economy as it promises to be, such an impact is insignificant next to the fact that the program represents a qualitative step toward nuclear war.

The Administration has claimed that the Soviet Union has built up its forces to a point of clear strategic advantage over the United States and that vast new armament spending is therefore required to close this "window of vulnerability." This view is built upon a series of misperceptions, miscalculations and misunderstandings.

The Pentagon knows, of course, that a go-for-broke "first strike" is not a rational Soviet option because as long as no reliable means of antisubmarine warfare exist—and none are expected to be developed in the near future—our forty-one missile-equipped submarines have more than enough firepower to reduce a large part of the Soviet Union to smoldering ash in response. Instead, the Pentagon has based its case on a "counterforce" scenario in which the Russians first destroy America's vulnerable land-based ICBMs and then threaten to launch a follow-up strike at U.S. cities if their demands are not met. The United States is then left with the dismaying choice of capitulation on the one hand or, by launching what is left of its strategic arsenal and forcing the Soviet Union to respond in kind, mutual national suicide on the other.

Despite the Pentagon's claims, however, the counterforce scenario is hardly any more plausible than the go-for-broke scenario, because it rests on two very dubious assumptions.

The first is that notwithstanding the murder of a considerable number of American citizens—the Office of Technology Assessment estimates there would be between 2 million and 20 million deaths in any "surgical" strike against our ICBMs—the United States would not retaliate for fear

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of the utter devastation of both cultures and the loss of perhaps 200 million more lives.

The second assumption is that the United States, put into the B-movie position of "surrender or die," would in fact give in to any demands the Russians might make after a counterforce attack—although of course at these stakes the terms of any surrender would have to be severe (complete demilitarization? political dissolution?) in the extreme. Could the Russians ever be certain enough of our surrender to such stringent terms to risk their country's very existence?

Moreover, America's options are not limited to "surrender or die." As Glenn Buchan, a former analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency, has pointed out, we might simply choose to make no response to a Soviet missile strike, neither retaliating nor giving in. That way the Soviet Union would be held responsible in world opinion not only for the deaths of millions of American civilians but also for the effects on health and weather of the cloud of radioactive dust that would move over the planet; yet it would have gained nothing. In other words, the counterforce option makes sense for the Russians only if they believe, first, that the United States will not retaliate *and*, second, that it will capitulate completely. Either is unlikely; both together are quite improbable.

But the Pentagon's rationale for an expanded defense budget goes beyond the supposed need to close the "window of vulnerability." It also rests on the notion, as Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has publicly stated, that the United States should try to achieve true first-strike capability itself, which in practice would have to include some means of antisubmarine warfare or a reliable antimissile defense system.

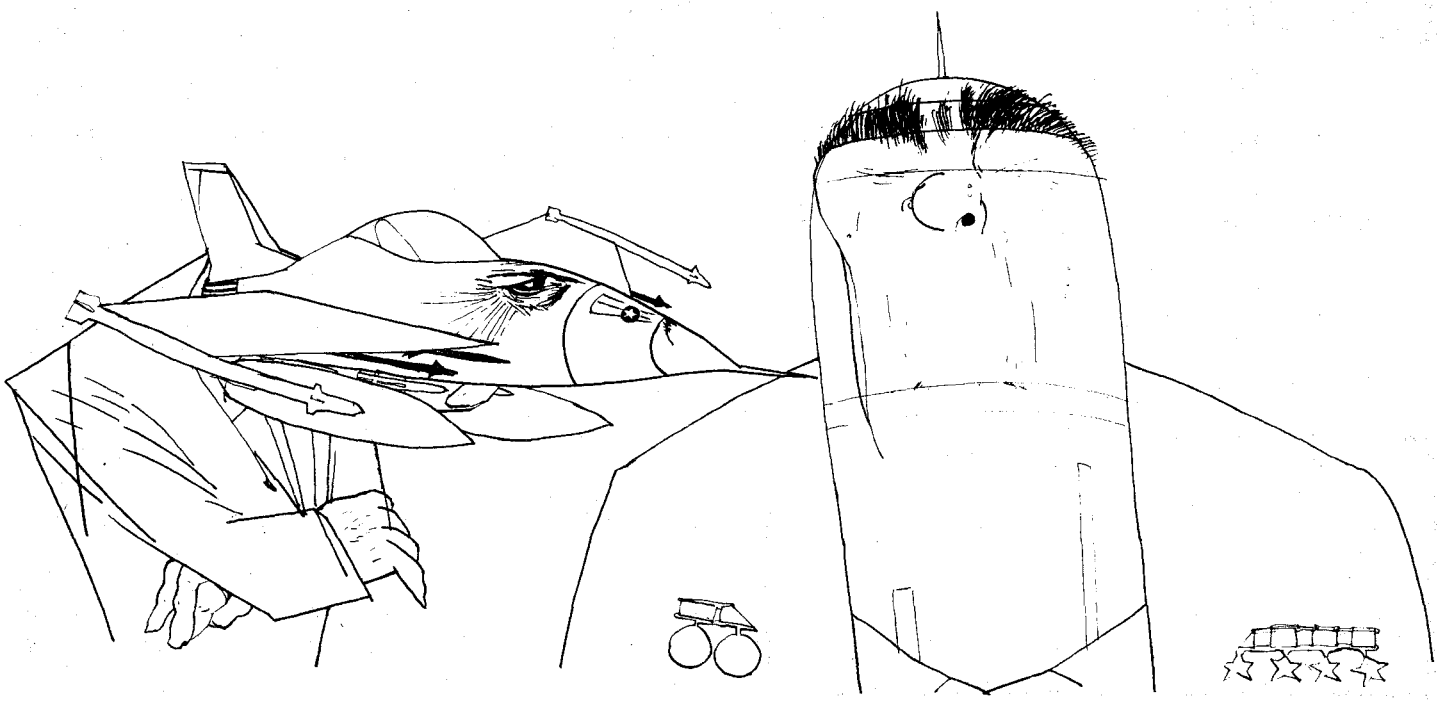
Yet, ironically, far from making the United States more secure, such a capability would profoundly increase the risk of nuclear war.

First, it would confront the Soviet Union with three stark choices: to drop out of the arms race; to gamble on a counterforce strike; or to try to develop its own first-strike force. The first choice is quite unimaginable; the second, as we have seen, is hardly more plausible. So the third, a prospect one must view with absolute terror, would seem to be almost inevitable. The consequence of one side developing true first-strike capability, then, is that the other is almost certain to go on to do the same—thus, to be the first to develop such a capability unavoidably creates a strong incentive to use it. And it also places the other side in so desperate a position that even a counterforce strike, with all its risks, might begin to seem preferable.

Second, an American reach for first-strike capability would only exacerbate the Soviet leaders' feelings of insecurity and simultaneously force them to devote an even larger share of their relatively meager resources to their own arms buildup. The closer the United States gets, the greater becomes Moscow's felt need to pursue some kind of drastic action both for external strategic reasons and for domestic political ones. And despite the misperceptions of the Pentagon, it is this perceived need, not any sense of opportunism, that tends to create international confrontation.

Political scientist Richard Lebow, author of *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis*, provides an interesting study in this area. He examined thirteen modern examples of what he calls "brinkmanship" crises in world politics and concluded that the side that initiates a crisis is not necessarily the one with a clear military advantage—this was true in only about a third of the cases—but rather the one with a strong internal need. Indeed, Lebow argues, once foreign policy objectives are seen as *necessary*, they tend to become perceived as *achievable*—even in the face of contrary factual evidence.

The 1962 Cuban missile crisis is a case in point. As several analysts have noted, the Soviet Union undertook that venture at a time of marked strategic disadvantage—when, in fact, its first-generation ICBMs had proved to be a failure, and the United States knew them to be a failure. But the



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Soviet leadership felt the need to compensate for this strategic disadvantage by deploying shorter-range missiles in a location, Cuba, closer to the United States. The move served as well to dramatize support for Castro, demonstrate resolve to Peking, transfer money from more expensive weapons development to nondefense industry and divert the minds of the citizenry from the failures of domestic agriculture.

In the coming years, the Soviet leaders face a bleak domestic picture: a stagnating economy; growing outlays for energy and agricultural imports; an aging industrial plant; continuing hostility from China; and increasing demands for political reforms both from Eastern Europeans and from the Central Asian ethnic groups within its own borders. The new American weapons programs therefore may very well force the Russians into some kind of drastic action if they feel the United States is on the verge of true first-strike capability and if they are under strong internal pressures.

From a long-range point of view, then, the Pentagon's push to "rearm" this country seems to rest on a set of false—and very dangerous—assumptions. Far from facing a "window of vulnerability," as the Administration seems to think, during these next few years we may in fact be facing a "window of stability." This may be our last chance to halt the arms race before mutual deterrence becomes a thing of the past and we find ourselves in a world permanently on the brink of nuclear holocaust. □

LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 354*)

and overt military rule [are] probably the destiny, the future, of all Communist countries, especially when their populations are moved to revolt." Well, "probably" every regime on the face of the earth might be moved toward overt military rule, "especially" in the face of certain kinds of popular revolt—not the least President Reagan's U.S. of A., were it to face nationwide general strikes. Does such a statement mean anything? No; it is so poorly put and thought through that it would barely merit a passing grade in a logic class. None dare call it reason. . . .

What about her facts? She finds "hitherto unknown" details from Poland: no previous coup-makers ever thought of turning off telephones, of imposing a permanent curfew, of forbidding the sale of gasoline for private autos or of banning all public meetings. Well, take a recent example of a sudden and brutal military coup that gives the appearance of being permanent—thus fascism, in her definition. During the rebellions in southwestern Korea in 1980, including the total collapse of authority in the important city of Kwangju and in the surrounding counties, the forces of suppression (*1*) cut all communications; (*2*) banned gasoline sales in nearby regions; (*3*) shortened the non-curfew hours of the day (within an existing curfew system in force *since 1945*); and (*4*) banned all public meetings for the duration of the crisis (a ban still in effect).

"No one had ever thought of a permanent curfew," says Sontag. Park Chung Hee's regime in the 1970s thought up *everything* the Polish junta has done, and more. It banned people meeting in groups larger than three, made it a crime to talk politics with foreigners and employed such new tortures as throwing protesting students naked into rooms full of writhing snakes. The successor regime of Chun Doo Hwan admits that about 300 people were killed in the suppression of the Kwangju rebellion, and sources in Japan put the number killed at 1,000 to 2,000—that is, far higher than the most inflated estimates from Poland. In the aftermath of the Kwangju uprising, tens of thousands of people were arrested, and most of them were sent to "thought purification" camps.

The responsibility for the events of 1980 in South Korea is as much American as the responsibility for the events of 1981-82 in Poland is Russian. Our military commander released troops to suppress the Kwangju rebels and our ambassador refused dissidents' requests to mediate the conflict; our government has since sent one warship after another to call at South Korean ports and, in 1981 and 1982, it sponsored the largest military exercises since the Korean War—far larger than Soviet maneuvers in or near Poland.

Yet about those events for which Americans bear responsibility *and* where protest can make a difference, Sontag is silent, or ignorant, or both. I have nothing but contempt for the suppression of Solidarity in Poland, but the Jaruzelski regime has a long way to go to keep up with our friends in South Korea, Chile and Argentina.

Sontag's diatribe raises larger issues than fact and logic, however. It is one more voice among the many since the mid-1970s and the end of the Vietnam War bespeaking the move from radical chic to conservative chic among so many American intellectuals. The constant has been *chic*, and today it is chic—and very easy—to join the chorus bewailing [the features] and treachery of the left. You're on the left? Well then, you're responsible for Stalin, and for Pol Pot, and for Mao Zedong, and for the fact that my students and my children don't listen to me anymore. In the past few years many intellectuals have sought desperately once again to embrace the comfortable middle, to place themselves inside the parameters of acceptable discourse; this has made *The New York Review of Books*, for example, indistinguishable from *Commentary* on many issues.

Bruce Cumings

TURNING A BLIND EYE

Santa Barbara, Calif.

I give you one personal example of what Susan Sontag referred to in chiding the American left about its blindness toward communism. Throughout my own education at West Coast universities, and based on my life in Hungary, I have always tried to report as honestly as I could about the threats to human liberty posed by the Marxist rejection of private property rights. (Incidentally, in Hitler's hands, fascism achieved the very same result, although national socialism did not stress the issue so emphatically as does communism.) All along I was ridiculed and consigned to the reactionary class (with the John Birch Society) by my eminent more-or-less left-wing professors and, later, colleagues. The idea that communism is simply more humane in its aims, never mind the misguided means employed to hasten their arrival, is so widespread among intellectuals (apart from conservatives, who have their own version of other-worldly utopia they like to ram down peoples' throats) that no leftist protests can wipe away the truth of Sontag's claims.

Another example. I have sent many letters to *The Nation* and *The New York Review of Books*, as well as to *Mother Jones* and other leftist publications, aiming to engage editors and authors in civilized debate on substantive moral and political issues. It is difficult to prove this, but I believe that the reason my letters were never published is that they evidently didn't embrace the underlying leftist "humanist" or collectivist moral framework. Arguments could be conducted only *within* the faith. . . .

Susan Sontag has hit the nail on the head. Communism as a profound human evil has been treated with greater mercy by most intellectuals than fascism and, especially, capitalism. I can imagine Santa Barbara intellectuals reacting indignantly to the appearance of some government-sponsored orchestra from El Salvador, but just the other

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week the Warsaw Philharmonic was received with open arms. No protests issued, even by the right! *Tibor R. Machan*
Senior Editor, reason

THE UNCRITICAL LEFT

San Francisco
I must say that after all is said and done, Susan Sontag is more right than wrong. While I'm sure she can be criticized for various inaccuracies, poor phrasings or misemphases, her main point is well taken: the *public perception* of the *overt* values of the left is that we do not make our criticisms of the repressive elements of existing Communist governments obvious or central. There may be refined debates within the left about such things, but the general public sees little evidence of this.

I know this is true from my own radicalization during the Vietnam War. Like many other Americans, fighting against the war also occasioned my leftist education. My most undying affection is for I. F. Stone and *The Nation*, but for a long period I was an avid reader of *The Guardian*. I learned a lot, and it all made sense. Only when I had to argue my point of view with nonleftist friends did I find it necessary to distinguish my values from those of Russian Communists. I improvised well, and faithfully, but with little if any guidance from the left. And when I discovered the truth of repression in the East, I felt not only disappointed and betrayed but also a little guilty. For how could I be a real socialist and criticize the U.S.S.R.? I know now that I picked up this attitude from the left. . . .

I think if Sontag's remarks are read carefully, she doesn't say that fascism and communism are identical—just that they are remarkably, uncomfortably, similar—with a "human face," if you will pardon her expression. If Sontag stimulates the development of a distinct, democratic socialist presence in American politics, she will have done a truly wonderful, and much belated, service for all of us. *Stephen Pennington*

ONE WOMAN'S FASCISM . . .

Atlanta
. . . Susan Sontag's obsession with the alleged refusal of the noncommunist left to be more truthful in exposing the evils of communist tyranny and the "brainwashing" of its citizens was positively delightful. In fact, I laughed until my sides ached.

Sontag's quest for intellectual honesty in exposing the terror of Communist regimes; her labeling of Communist governments as fascist; and her characterization of Eastern Europeans as "enslaved" betrays her inability to understand politics and the world we live in. One must ask what she uses as a measurement in determining what constitutes a fascist government. . . .

The opinion of the black left (noncommunist and Marxist) is that a fascist government is something akin to American "democracy." I submit that any black person (or Mexican or Indian) born in the former slave-holding South conceives of fascism as the concrete methods used to enforce the rule of whites. If you were to ask the minority left and the black population in general to name the most tyrannical government on earth, the predominant reply would certainly be the South African government. Surely Sontag must know that "one man's democracy is another man's tyranny."

Perhaps she didn't know that the black left's perception of reality is so different from that of the noncommunist and communist left that they don't even engage in intellectual discussion. . . . In fact, since American democracy was constructed on the backs of blacks, Mexicans and Indians, the minority left is unshakably convinced that the Anglo-Saxon people and American capitalism are the main enemies of the people of the world.

There is no reluctance on the black left to criticize Communist countries. However, that criticism proceeds from an entirely different point of view. The black left criticizes Communist regimes for the inadequate support given by the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries to the nonwhite freedom fighters of the world. It questions the shortages of goods and demands to know why the Russians do not supply liberation movements with more advanced weapons. Harsh criticism of the U.S.S.R. is raised over the question of why the white Russians continue to dominate Soviet politics and the party structure when the nonwhite Russians make up the majority of the population. . . .

Black left-wingers are in sympathy with the upsurge of the Polish workers and condemn the state of affairs the ruling party has steered the country into. But it would be political suicide to join company with white supremacist union leaders and "leftists" who condemn the very governments and people that make it possible to be free of the "ugly Americans."

The minority left will continue to have a distinctive view of the world and continue to laugh at and despise those leftists incapable of not acting as oppressors. My opinion? I would opt for a Joseph Stalin over a Strom Thurmond or a Jesse Helms any day. Under Stalin I could only vote for one "president." Under Thurmond or Helms, none.
Darryl Mitchell

DEBILITATING DEBATE

Buffalo
. . . Raising the anticommunist issue in the way Susan Sontag does ignores the complexity of the Solidarity movement and succumbs to a Reaganite view. It remains unclear what forces are at play within the Polish movement, but what is clear is that many members of Solidarity are not as quick to dismiss the "system" as Sontag is.

By never stating in concrete terms the nature of the system she would prefer, by eschewing a more responsible discussion of the interrelationships of capitalist and Communist states and by resorting to the simple code words "banks and tanks," Sontag favors a form of argument that does not challenge the mode of current political debate.

This style of argument substitutes labels and images for concrete realities. By choosing old sides before attempting to arrive at fresh solutions, we will once again waste our energies attacking one another while the enemies of free debate, no matter what label they wear, enjoy the show.
Arnold Hook
Andrea Abbott

FIGHTING 'SUCCESSFUL FASCISM'

New York City
Susan Sontag was not writing a Ph.D. thesis in political science, and therefore her label for communism ("successful fascism") seems to me as good as calling Gen. Augusto Pinochet a fascist. She was obviously not concerned with terminological accuracy but with an emotionally charged description of recent events in Poland. Her label is, in a sense, quite close to Jeane Kirkpatrick's distinction between totalitarian rule, as represented today almost exclusively by various Marxist-Leninist regimes, and authoritarian dictatorships, typified by some of the Latin American juntas. While recent history has demonstrated that one *can* get rid, often without bloodshed, of the latter ("unsuccessful fascisms"), as witness Greece, Spain or Portugal, the former cannot be overthrown by domestic forces for the simple reason that they receive effective help from the U.S.S.R. Among the many examples here are Afghanistan, Angola, Abyssinia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The one exception, Cambodia, only demonstrates the validity of Kirkpatrick's concept. There, a less successful fascism was overthrown by a more successful one: the backing of Communist Russia was more substantial than that of equally Communist China.

So while liking Sontag's label, I must confess I was confused by the discussion that followed her piece in *The Nation*. Many contributors seem to be basically anticommunist and even knowledgeable about the consequences of Communist takeovers for the people of the afflicted countries. Yet I don't see much evidence that they would be prepared to do much to stop the spread of successful fascism, except in an academic, armchair manner. I wonder how many of them realize that the choice in the real world is not between good and evil but between evil and lesser evil, as Albert Camus knew so well.

Many of the contributors also strike me as not knowing very much about Lenin and

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Leninism, or about modern history, unless they are turning a blind eye to certain things. Reagan, with all his lack of knowledge of historical details, appears to have more grasp of what communism is than many of them. . . .

Consider the debate in the context of El Salvador. I wish I could believe that the rebels there are fighting for democratic socialism. But after seeing "democratic socialism" precede Communist coup d'états in mine and other Eastern European countries, I can no longer believe that. What kind of social democrats can these insurgents be if they teach their troops "democratic centralism"? Surely everyone knows that this political concept is the foundation of the opposite of democratic socialism. Surely everyone knows that Lenin never ceased to explain that social reformers like Duarte were more dangerous to the "democratic centralist" (i.e., Bolshevik) movement than strict conservatives: they create an illusion in the minds of the workers that life, after all, may not be so bad under capitalist democracy by creating a life under capitalist democracy that is, after all, not so bad.

In El Salvador, it seems to me, you have the classical pattern of a communist overthrow. You have a moderate reformer who tries to change things for the better. The "radicals," i.e., the groups dominated by Marxist-Leninists, immediately respond with an armed insurrection, utilizing mainly young people (the "Hitler youths" of successful fascism). While creating the conditions of civil war, the insurgents keep offering peace and compromise. Some of the groups in the rebel camp may originally have been serious about democratic socialism, but the civil war conditions created and maintained by the Marxist-Leninists inevitably push the rebels into the ideological camp of the "democratic centralists," and in the end their "subjective views," as Lenin would have put it, don't count. . . .

What is to be done? I do not believe America should try to undo what it did to Latin America by abandoning it to successful fascism. It would be a great disservice to those the Americans harmed, and it would be a crime against those parts of the world that, so far, have not fallen prey to fascism, successful or unsuccessful.

Josef Skvorecky

'ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA'

Chicago

I am a subscriber and an admirer of *The Nation*, but I was disturbed by the recent McCarthyist display of *mea culpa* anticommunism. During the 1950s, those who crawled before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, beating their breasts, did so out of cowardice, weakness and fear of losing their jobs. Contemptible, but understandable. But now, will the pages of *The Nation* take the place of committee hearings for anticommunist confessionals? It is sad that *The Nation*'s contributions to peace and civil liberties should be undercut by some writers who have swallowed the highly financed, well-organized anti-Soviet propaganda of the ultraright and the militarists.

One wonders why these literary anticommunists are coming out of the woodwork now. Is it because some of the American bourgeois "left" will quickly crawl into line to follow the escalated beat of the cold-war drummers?

It is interesting to note that the structure of Soviet society has been pretty much the same for sixty-five years, with or without our approval. It has been and is now a dictatorship of the proletariat, as established by the 1917 revolution. It lays claim to a broader democracy than ours in terms of providing for social needs, but it is a system with unconcealed civil-liberties limitations for those in opposition.

So why join now the hysterically shrill chorus of the ultraright that fuels the war machine? History is witness to the fact that since 1917, Eastern European communists have fought to the death the restoration of capitalism in their countries. Whether we agree or disagree with this determination, it is obvious that there is absolutely *nothing new* about it. It should also be obvious that this defensive posture does not pose a threat to the West, meaning the capitalist countries, as our war-mongers would want us to believe. . . .

Our unsolved economic problems might drive the Reagan Administration to reckless military ventures. All efforts, all voices, are needed to keep the peace, to curtail our militarized economy and to find answers to our domestic woes of joblessness, plant closings and bankruptcies.

Nation writers can make a significant contribution and safely leave anticommunism and Soviet-baiting in the paws of yahoo scribblers for ultraright magazines.

Jack D. Spiegel
Organizer, Chicago District,
Amalgamated Clothing & Textile
Workers Union, A.F.L.-C.I.O.

POLAND'S DISTINCTION

Perth Amboy, N.J.

Put democratic socialists in charge of Communist Poland and they would not face great struggles. Put them in charge of fascist El Salvador and there would be a helluva row. There is a difference: Poland is tragic, fewer die. *David Mandel*

'JEJUNE' CRITICISM

Chevy Chase, Md.

In his recent letter, Ralph Schoenman says, "*The Nation* symposium in response to Susan Sontag's speech at Town Hall was a healthy corrective to a jejune performance . . ." ["Supporting Solidarity," *The Nation*, March 13]. The unabridged Random House Dictionary defines *jejune* as (*1*) deficient or lacking in nutritive value, (*2*) without interest, (*3*) lacking knowledge or experience, (*4*) juvenile. If *The Nation* had thought of the speech in those terms, it could have published a critical account or editorial. That it ran a symposium to encourage discussion of the points Sontag raised gave emphasis to its stated view that, though it disagreed with some of her speech, what she said was significant.

Schoenman, being free with words, speaks harshly of "the shrill anticommunism of those who are hostile to workers' movements everywhere," as though this is a further dismissal of Sontag and makes it unnecessary to deal with non-shrill anticommunists. In this he again differs from *The Nation*, which points out that Sontag "had addressed an important issue: the attitude of the left to communists and communism."

Theodore Wilentz

ONE LESS HIT TO MAKE

Miami

Please tell Susan Sontag that she can now safely walk the streets of "Little Havana" in Miami. The right-wing Cuban commentators on the radio stations are heralding her "defection," and one can only suppose that she will be met with a parade headed by members of the Everglades anticommunist training camps; that her person will be flanked by ex-National Guardsmen from Anastasio Somoza's regime; and that they will give her a cocktail party funded by the drug money that also feeds the Cuban terrorists.

At the risk of taking Sontag too seriously, I just thought that *The Nation* should hear from some others whose day-to-day, "non-intellectual" work has been dented by this controversy.

Between the Cuban right-wing community, the Nicaraguan exiles and all the other reactionary forces that rule this city, we tend to feel overwhelmed. But even so we try, and at times succeed, in getting people to acknowledge the fact that the Red Menace Theory is highly exaggerated. So you can imagine how it is when a quotable, respectable ally is reported to have jumped the fence and is then regarded as a heroine by the opposition.

Alas, if we are to gather anything positive from the Sontag turnover down here, let us just be happy that there is one less person on the Omega 7 hit list. *Margarita Vazquez*

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double-spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space. Our policy is to publish as many letters as space permits, but inevitably a backlog develops, so bear with us.

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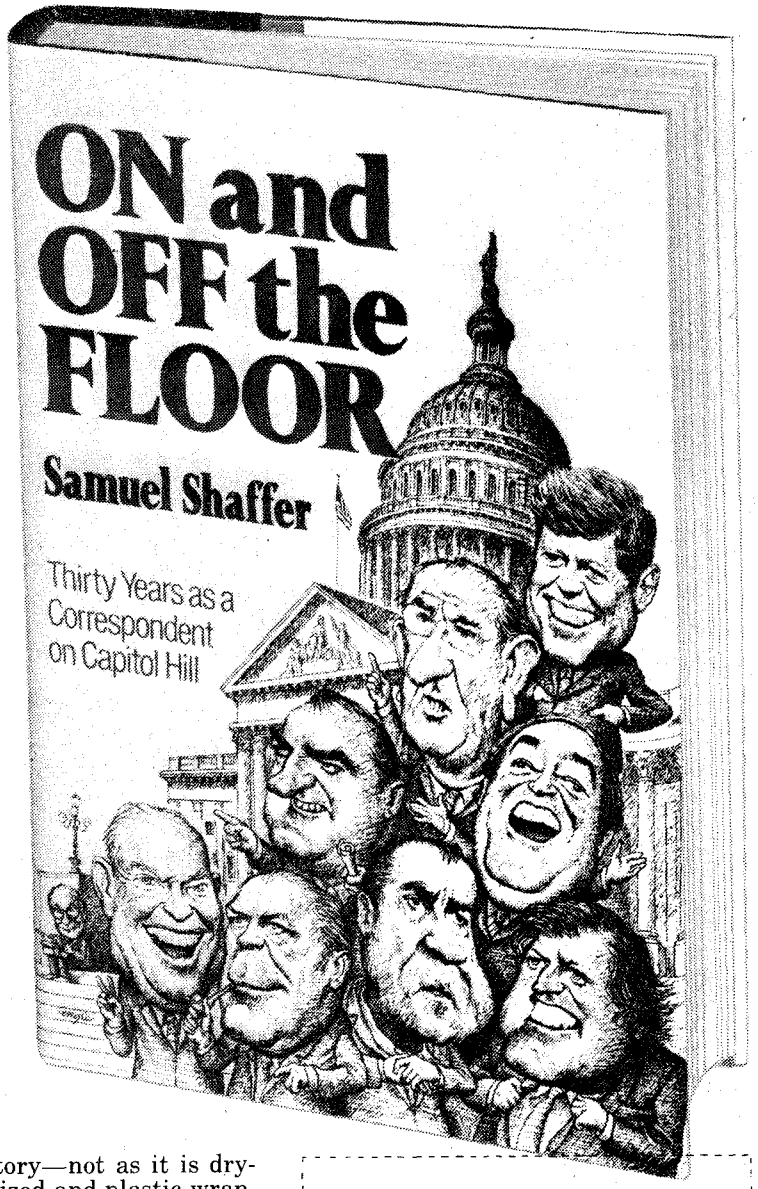

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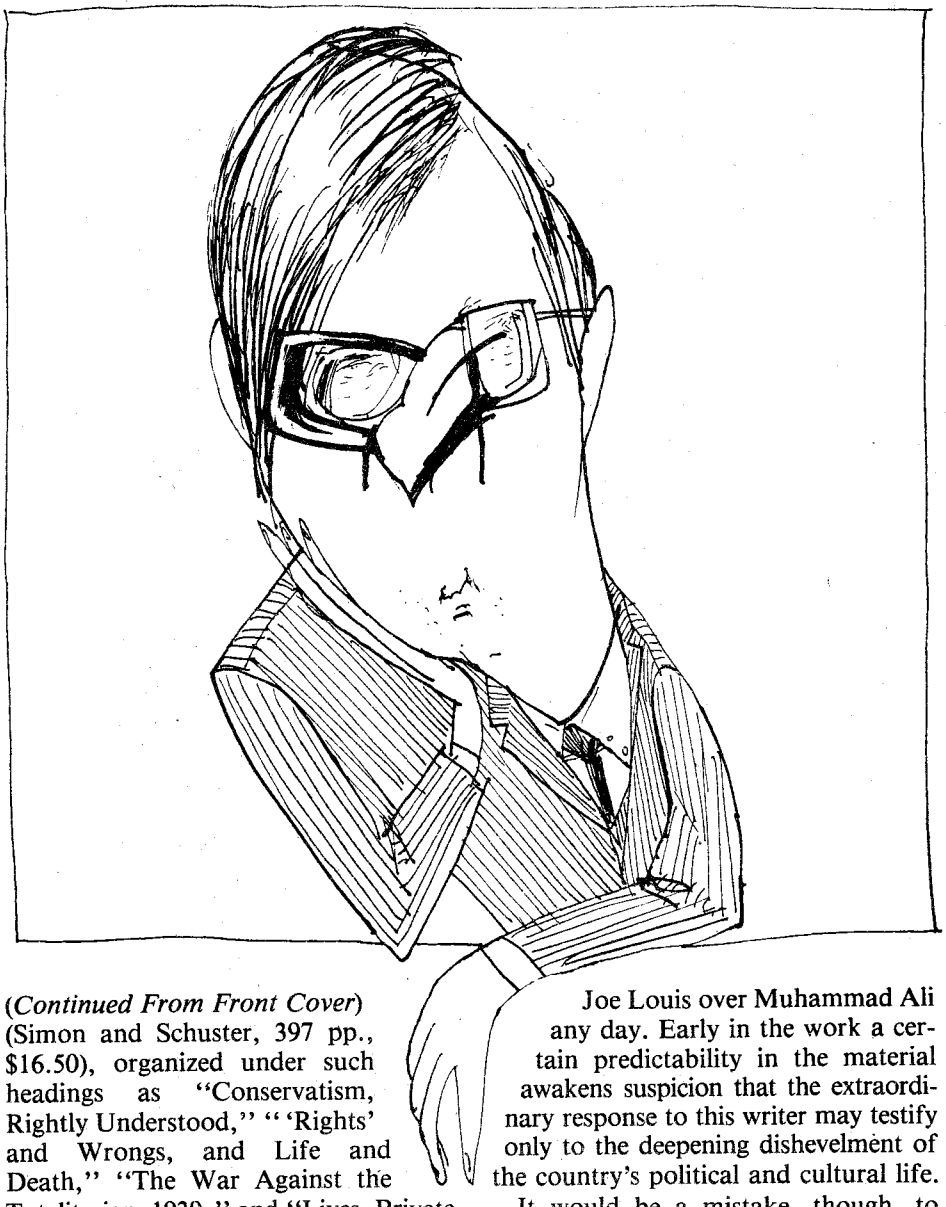
BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Pursuit of . . . Charm



(*Continued From Front Cover*)

(Simon and Schuster, 397 pp., $16.50), organized under such headings as "Conservatism, Rightly Understood," "'Rights' and Wrongs, and Life and Death," "The War Against the Totalitarian, 1939-" and "Lives, Private and Public," a series that juxtaposes commentaries on Sir Thomas More and John Wayne, Pope John Paul II and Ray Kroc, Alger Hiss and Strom Thurmond, among others. Few positions taken in these pieces will seem remarkable to readers acquainted with rightist tunes of glory of the last half-century. The government is too intrusive; today's youth—except in Salt Lake City and the military academies—behaves badly; parents are taking child-rearing too lightly; subsidized abortions encourage promiscuity; get tough with Russia; Joe Louis over Muhammad Ali any day. Early in the work a certain predictability in the material awakens suspicion that the extraordinary response to this writer may testify only to the deepening dishevelment of the country's political and cultural life.

It would be a mistake, though, to assume that *The Pursuit of Virtue* warrants less than close attention. The book lights up a mental landscape that could be the same as that of our policy makers, and in the process, shows how the uglier, old-line Tory sounds—hauteur, hardheartedness—have been dubbed out of contemporary advocacy of old-line Tory causes (defense of privilege, denial of class dispute, idealization of *noblesse oblige*). The book also writes an instructive new chapter on "image," as that concept eats its way further into our woodwork, burrowing from star system politics into star system punditry. And, most important, Will's seemingly obsessive worry that his audience may find him holier-than-thou—his terror of preceptorship—dramatizes an undernoticed cultural problem: increasing public dimness about the character of democratic discourse.

The Presentation of Self

Initially the most striking item on display in *The Pursuit of Virtue* is the author's indulgence in a limited mimicry of left critics of capitalism. In the introduction and in several early pieces, Will comments disdainfully on entrepreneurial dynamism: "Karl Marx . . . got one thing right: capitalism undermines traditional social structures and values; it is a relentless engine of change, a revolutionary inflamer of appetites, enlarger of expectations, diminisher of patience." Similar talk surfaces at intervals elsewhere. (I would guess that left-leaning people who speak warmly of George Will have chanced on one or another of these observations.) There's a warning about "an economy increasingly geared to the manufacture of frivolous appetites ('How many Calvin Kleins in your closet, America?')." There's praise of Pope John Paul II for his effort to call "the affluent societies" to a life "less partial and distorting than the pursuit of pleasure."

Solzhenitsyn's commencement speech at Harvard is quoted and understood, and there's approval for that hero's doubts that "a society founded on lightly regulated selfishness can summon the vision and sacrifice necessary for combating determined enemies." Two charities—Saint Jude's Ranch for Children on the Mojave Desert and the Little Brothers of the Poor in Chicago—come in for notice. And there's an assertion that "the world's . . . Most Serious Shortage . . . is imagination. (I mean imagination of a particular kind: the kind that produces social sympathy—the ability to comprehend, however dimly, how other people live.)"

Observations and admonitions of this sort are becoming conventional, to be sure, among essayists on the right—conservative chic. In *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, for example, Irving Kristol asked: "Can men live in a free society if they have no reason to believe it is also a just society?" (He answered: "I do not think so. . . . They cannot for long accept a society in which power, privilege,

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and property are not distributed according to some morally meaningful criteria.") And it's not inconceivable that somewhere down the road the admonitions may attain more than ritual significance. There's no reason, certainly, why a writer whose form is the short newspaper or magazine column couldn't make that form serve a serious critical purpose. Pithy firsthand reporting on neglected sectors of experience helps to clarify the moral uses of the sympathetic imagination. Case studies of commercial rapacity, whether in a pharmaceutical house or a law factory, help to dramatize the destructiveness of laissez-faire dynamism. Will's book includes pieces about advertising, the environment, the porn industry, "luxo" shopping (Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills), McDonald's and West Point; plenty of opportunities here, if wanted, for fleshing out the indictment of "lightly regulated selfishness."

But, unsurprisingly, the opportunities aren't seized. Will's approval of traditional values, social sympathy and Marx's lucky shot as regards capitalism leads away from anatomies of greed or accounts of the constructive imagination in action. Strokes of character rather than foundations of argument, they function as softening agents, means of easing the outlines of the rightist personality. The conservative who speaks from the start as a person offended by hustler-style tycoonery separates himself from high rollers, Yahoos, unbuttoned Nofzigerians and others whose coarse manners and obsession with profit and fortune give the right a bad name. And the conservative who, like Will, presents himself as a student who's read Marx through on his own, sifting and winnowing mounds of junk in hope of gleaning whatever concept may yet be worth preserving, establishes thoughtful curiosity and lack of prejudice as identifying marks of his kind. On the left and right alike, ignoramuses can be found who suppose a *solzhenitsyn* to be a miracle gout cure and The Little Brothers of the Poor to be a San Francisco disco catering to homosexuals. But the *New* Right is no ignoramus. It's as remote from the presumed gaucherie of a wildcat oil driller as from the presumed grittiness of a labor union V.P.

And Will's New Right is to be appreciated primarily on this level, as a style and posture, not as a source of ponderable ideas and correctives, as a winning personality rather than as a summons to a certain height. In the past, smart conservatives have been exceptionally skillful summoners. Time and again they've braced people to the wall. Their feeling for history is close-grained. Their faith in the primacy of individual human relationships and in the need for high standards of individual conduct freshens the conscience. They invent memorable intellectual commands (clear your mind of cant). And they insist on explicitness—the spelling out, in sentences, of the underexamined moral foundations of political views, and of the reasons for maintaining continuity with the past. Like other people, they're not proof against extravagance; on bad days they confuse being hard-nosed with being intelligent and behave as though they alone know which world out there is really real. But their strength on good days—the impersonal strength of Michael Oakeshott reproaching utopians, or Burke shaming "sophisters, economists, and calculators," or F.R. Leavis in *Scrutiny* excoriating British Marxists—is inestimable.

But this kind of strength isn't sought in *The Pursuit of Virtue*. The book's voice is purely personal. The bottom line, as they say, is self-presentation.

How Many People Is We?

The key characteristic of the self that's presented is, predictably, agreeableness, and it's brought into view in a variety of ways—by a portrait of the writer as fundamentally unrestive in a society that's one-dimensionally middle class, by a treatment of our ills that stresses the healing possibilities of lightly ironic humor and by a steady insistence that tastes and causes necessarily repellent to one another can be neatly harmonized within a single, likably relaxed mind.

Following the opening salute to the sympathetic imagination, source of knowledge about "how other people live," the columns reprinted in *The Pursuit of Virtue* move swiftly toward skepticism that genuinely different "other" people can be found out there in any number. The country is all of a piece; everybody belongs to the well-off middle; actually there are no "others." The Pope and Solzhenitsyn have held, each in his special way, that Americans are universally affluent and fun-seeking, rich and pleasure-soaked, and they're roughly right. It's middle America that will be paying for the Reagan economic program; the President "is asking Congress to pull a bit of padding from the 'padded society' which means in large measure from the middle class." If low-income men and women aren't a mere legend, they surely constitute so tiny and exotic a group that it would take a Mr. Kean, finder of lost persons, to locate them. Who among us knows a working-person? Coal miners, says Will, belong to a working class that's "as foreign as Mongolia." So do subway riders: "In New York subways I am told (I am not crazy enough to venture down to check) . . . it would be an improvement if many would just stand around loitering and spitting." If more working-class people existed, we'd profit, because, as it happens, they're superb critics of sentimental liberalism. (Will is taken with the workers depicted in the film *The Deer Hunter*, trashers of peacenik fatuity.)

But the case is that few if any exist. Naturally we, the pleasure-soaked masses, stand prepared to extend sympathy to the halt and the orphaned through our favorite charities. Naturally the pleasure-soaked masses remain alert to the possibility of encountering unfamiliar forms of social life. But good sense tells us that the most reasonable thought we can have about the other side is that the life we'd find there is probably exactly the same as our own. "How many Calvin Kleins in your closet, America?"

The faint ideological thrust of this attitudinizing is that no constituency in the United States could benefit from radical solutions to social problems. (Will assures his readers that "not for years have sensible socialists believed in public ownership of the means of production and exchange.") But ideology is incidental. What counts is that, in portraying the country as one-dimensional and his own citizenship as unproblematic, the columnist establishes that exerting moral pressure isn't his game. Would I badger you? asks each of his pieces obliquely, through its tone. We, the vast majority, are in this together. *We* take cabs, *we* avoid the subway, *we* know no workers, *we* live high on the hog. A flicker of moral ambition may incite one of us at moments to chat up an interesting charity, or to allude, with a show of anxiety, to a culture of "lightly regulated selfishness." But we know better than to pursue this. No sermons, no manufacturing of spurious guilt. At

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our core, to one another and with ourselves, we're urbane, honest and without moral airs. Another way of putting it: we're people of charm.

Have Light Irony, Can Cope

And people of humor. On camera George Will seldom smiles, and occasionally he adopts—for a patch of seconds—a lecturer's tone, but it's the humorous side of things that he savors, particularly the unconscious humor of the morally intense. They'll always be with us, the morally intense and humorless, says the voice that speaks in *The Pursuit of Virtue*. People who won't chuckle at the President's wonderfully defusing one-liners at press conferences. People who perversely insist that a decision to use public monies to support segregationist institutions can't have had "merely procedural" ends in view. The neoconservative understands these glumbodies and carefully avoids the beamishness they abhor. He's familiar with the ancient American love of the jeremiad. He's aware that the universal, pleasure-soaked affluence unifying us as one classless community has often stirred outsiders (the Pope, Solzhenitsyn) to protest, and that these protests in turn cause some insiders to question whether they too shouldn't learn the lingo of denunciation.

But while one should respect the outsiders, one should also be wary of losing one's balance. There's a little-known American freedom—the freedom to treat entrepreneurial rapacity as entertainment—that's good to remember here. A way of achieving a modest distance, as distinguished from a ridiculous moral high. Well-meaning citizens who forget this freedom become overheated and fret about divorce rates, or the startling sight of their grandchildren, 8-year-old twins, giggling at an X-flick on cable. They find it difficult to remain undisturbed about such a phenomenon as, say, the $4 billion U.S. porn industry. They might even rush to conclude that the porn industry is a foreshadowing—a warning about the ultimate destination of our demented, inflaming, everything-is-permitted capitalism.

But if people of this sort would only remember the freedom to be entertained, they'd see their own foolishness. Will's piece about porn hucksters presents the industry as less distasteful than diverting—a "pioneering and

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heroic rascality." The columnist notes, humorously, that the United States "has beat [out] a foreign cartel—an OPEC of porn exporters." He quotes "an entertaining report by James Cook" in *Forbes* magazine that "at least in the pornography business the American gift for economic growth survives." The *Forbes* report observes that the porn trade managers are unhappy because their audience is limited to people over 35, but that too is humorous to Will: "Cook says (drolly, I think) that [that] is 'merely a marketing problem,' and it will be tackled by 'someone from Hollywood, *Hustler*, or the Harvard Business School.' "

Nobody adequately inward with the easing effect of light irony will feel obliged to press on past the drolleries to inquire into the connection between alienated sex and the structures of social and economic dynamism. Wisdom doesn't brood about the wasteland, or imagine different destinies; it cools itself with wry thoughts about the endless inventiveness of our ineluctable American hustle.

It does the same with advertising. George Will on this subject begins with an acknowledgment that public lying may breed cynicism—but at once shifts to the theme that more often than not public lying breeds wit: "When . . . half a class of third-graders, asked to spell 'relief,' write 'R-o-l-a-i-d-s,' alarmists cite the power of advertising. I merely admire the wittiness of American youth." Wisdom doesn't brood on the moral impact of corrupt enlargers of expectation; it cools itself with wry thoughts of the kiddies' increasing proficiency at parody. Implicit throughout *The Pursuit of Virtue* is the thesis that alarmism about consumerism, advertising and the rest is rather worse than the things themselves. At the end of the column about advertising, an ad for "a very small bank for sale" is quoted from a banking magazine. The quoted copy names the price and location, adding the information that the bank is situated in a "dreary little town." There you are, says the columnist, smiling, truth in advertising after all—"a sterling example of candor in commerce." Non-candor is a non-problem. Have light irony, can cope. Relax.

Rodeo Drive is equally recreational. A soul of simple faith roused by Pope John Paul II's summons to a life "less partial and distorting than the pursuit of pleasure" might know no better than to feel a quiver of outrage at the sight, in a shop window, of a fox fur bedspread priced at $42,000. But yet once more: the soul is overreacting. Paying $42,000 for a bedspread is wrong, but not very wrong. We need to retain the sense of proportion. Exercise humorous tolerance, as with thousand-dollar place settings. "Some facets of American civilization are—let us face facts—less than excellent. The saxophone, for one. Football halftime shows for another. Frozen French toast, for a third. But there is, I insist, a form of excellence for almost anything, even excess. So let us now praise (sort of) two and a half blocks of Rodeo Drive here." May the hungry sleep well.

At the level of ideology, needless to say, such pieces cancel out that early mimicry of left criticism of capitalism, the inflamer of appetites. But here too ideology is immaterial. What counts is the emerging psychological profile, the soothing, binding gestures of wry acceptance, the agreeable refusal to deal damnation. New Tory, it appears, possesses both sensitivity and the proportioning sense of humor. Smoothly he moves from momentary concern (illustrative of fine feeling) to relaxing smiles (illustrative of balance), from Marx on the inflamers to moderating chuckles about saxophones, frozen French toast and $42,000 bedspreads; from worries about the defacing of the environment (not a word against Interior Secretary James Watt) to good-humored acclaim of Ray Kroc of McDonald's as a genius. As there is, essentially, only one class of people in America, so there is, essentially, only one kind of domestic problem, that which can swiftly be teased away by humor. New Tory isn't just civil, agreeable, well disposed; he's also amused and amusing. In it with us, to repeat. *Without airs.*

Big Mac Boulevardier

And beyond all this he's catholic, some kind of miniature Peaceable Kingdom of taste in himself, a center wherein the shoddy and the well made, the sophisticated and the provincial, the brilliant and the mindless, the knowing and the square, Sir Thomas More and John Wayne, mingle nonjudgmentally in further proof of the seamlessness of the American state. George Will's many badges of gentility (the most conspicuous is an intermittently priggish Anglophilia) are never out of sight for long. The columnist admires the BBC

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("sublime") and treasures Oxford (the lovely eccentrics, the ancient lawns, the enthusiasm for teaching). Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* "provided the greatest reading pleasure of my first forty years." C.S. Lewis and Lewis Carroll are passions, and, on a single page, we find quotations from Disraeli, Walter Bagehot, George Eliot and Jonathan Swift. Here and there the diction extends a pinky, overworking such terms as *tiresome*, *jolly* and *enchanting*. (There's an "enchanting" novel by G.K. Chesterton, an "enchanting" refrain in a country music song and an "enchanting" defense of Hamilton Jordan by friends of Jimmy Carter's "blue denim Presidency.") Propriety of dress is taken for granted as a value; those uniforms Nixon bought weren't a bad idea and, for unspoken reasons that everyone who counts will understand, Jimmy in jeans was absurd.

But the urbane Anglophile elitist coexists in these pages with another figure—a country boy of plain and wholesome Midwestern origins who is given to celebrations of wife and babes, camping expeditions and baseball. George Will's rural self never quarrels with the cosmopolitan professorial-comer. Enthusiasm for "The Great State" (Illinois) is regularly leavened with self-protective capital letters, memories of school days at Oxford, allusions (suitably vague) to Donne and Baudelaire, comparisons of the crude city of Washington, D.C., with European centers one has known: "In a mature capital, like Paris or London, there are many old, established, confident elites, in industry, finance, the arts and universities. In Washington, nothing is old . . ."

But there are no conflicts of values, and Middle America never recedes as a source of good. Will delights in the "quintessentially American" Mormons, lovingly celebrates a football-mad Nebraskan who carves cheerleaders' jargon (GO BIG RED) on his mother's tombstone because she liked the game. There's a booster piece about male and female West Point cadets: "When I was there [at the Academy] last fall it was grand to hear, as the cadets assembled for dinner, soprano voices in the football pep rally: 'Napalm North Carolina!' " And Will, the Baudelaire buff, nevertheless places himself with the plain folk as a hater of modern art, modern music and modern sex education, as a fan of Big Macs and little girls who want to grow up to be nurses rather than doctors.

On its face this is a complicated—some may say impossible—array of tastes. Who, one asks, can digest a Crackerjack box filled with George Eliot, Phyllis Schlafly, Dean Swift and the Chicago Cubs? But to ask that question is again to miss the point. The culture pieces reprinted in *The Pursuit of Virtue* work in ideological support of the assumption that in America class differences—people significantly dissimilar—don't exist. But, far more consequential, through the creation of George Will as heartland Anglophile, Big Mac boulevardier, highbrow-middlebrow, hip-square, they add still another reassuring dimension to Tory charm. In yesteryear, propertied defenders of privilege were a predictably sniffish lot, all polo and couture, perpetual detourers around Salt Lake City and Omaha, given to making others feel shame at their grossness. But the personality defined in *The Pursuit of Virtue* is pure agility, alighting for the length of one column on this or that snobbish base, but racing off in the next to a different brow-position entirely, from which a kindly idolatrous attitude toward America the Absolutely Square

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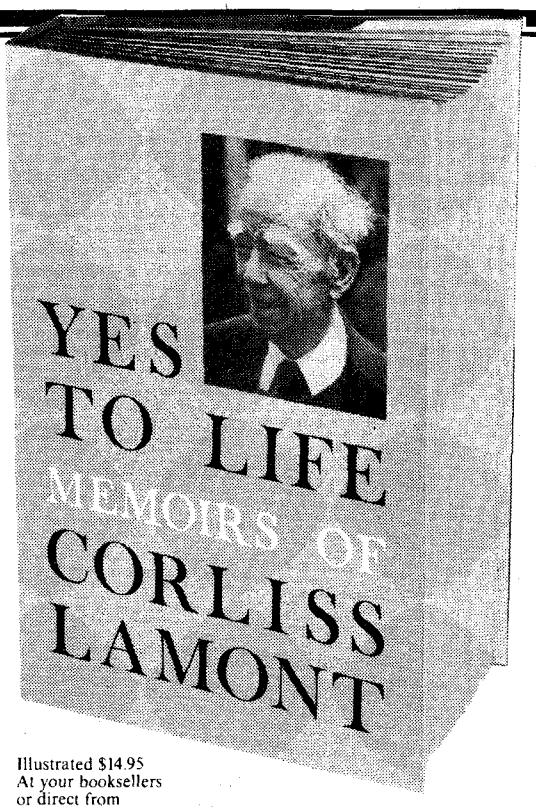

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can be taken up. New Tory isn't merely calm, equable, well disposed, isn't merely amused and amusing; he's in addition our quintessentially mobile man. He chides not, neither does he mock. Whoever we are, wherever we are, he is, despite the vest, the pinstripe, one of us.

The Pursuit of Agreeableness

It's possible to carp at contradictions in this self-presentation. (A *macho* man ceaselessly calling for bold muscular confrontations with Russia shouldn't, perhaps, be scared of the IRT.) People comfortable (I am not) with the purely social standard upon which Will's judgments rest might themselves find something "vulgar" in his response to the cadets who cry "Napalm North Carolina!" Inside the neoconservative think tanks, Will's defense of capitalism is perhaps a beam-width to the left of mainstream. (The more nearly official position, as summarized by George Gilder in *Wealth and Poverty*, holds that rapacious capitalism is *love*, not, as Will has it, entertainment.) And, as I've already suggested, readers with a lively memory of the impact on their minds of a strong conservative argufier will be sharply disappointed by Will's performance in disputation. Opinions on a half-dozen major issues contrary to those stated in *The Pursuit of Virtue* have been set forth by significant voices of the left—E.P. Thompson, C.L.R. James, Michael Harrington, Stuart Hall, Terry Eagleton, William Winpisinger, Ed Sadlowski, Myles Horton, Salvador Allende, numberless others. Yet the book engages none of these voices for the length of a sentence.

But my own reservations lie elsewhere, and have to do with the terror of preceptorship I've already mentioned. The other week a snippet of writing appeared in the pages of *The Village Voice*—a casual review, nothing elegant or alliterative—that's pertinent to this problem. The piece, by Stanley Crouch, reported on a performance by Phil Woods, the saxophonist, and for most of its length it praised Woods's music. On toward the end, though, the critic took the performer briskly to task for failures of decorum in costume:

> Woods should become more conscious of bandstand dress. His group looked as though they were rehearsing in somebody's living room, a big mistake if Woods wishes to separate his art from pop trivia. For all his protestations against commercial music, his group's attire reflects the influence of groups like the Rolling Stones far more than it does the legacy of sophistication and fire of which he is a worthy descendant. It is interesting that avant-garde groups like the World Saxophone Quartet understand that, while Woods is, as a young drummer observed while we listened to him, "one of those guys who make people think jazz is something played by sloppy, bum-type people." All right: Mr. Woods, give your listeners something good to look at as well as listen to. Duke Ellington did it, and there can be no better argument for the practice and the respect it helped gain.

What is pleasing in these no-nonsense sentences—I don't confuse them with the bracing work of a great conservative mind—is their straightforward acceptance of the duty to teach. Crouch seems to understand that upholding a traditional value, being *for* a standard, may mean that one can't look agreeable in all circumstances, or in the presence of every manifestation of the culture as it is. But, says his manner, let's get on with it anyway. Stating his differences

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plainly, he specifies the standard that shapes his judgment; he pushes himself, in the name of respect for an art, to name the bearings of the standard in such a way as to insure that the man he's trying to teach will grasp that the teaching isn't personal, that the lesson belongs not to a "set," not to this critic or that, not to blacks or to whites, but to the common world—to all with wit enough to want to grade up to its demands.

The result, in my opinion, is good democratic talk, sound in its moral assumptions, in touch with the difference between the spirit of fraternity (which can be generously preceptorial) and the spirit of flattery (which trembles at the thought of not making the club, or of not increasing in popularity). There's a temptation, inevitably, to contrast Crouch on Phil Woods's clothes with Will on Jimmy Carter's blue jeans. And it probably is worth noting that the column in *The Pursuit of Virtue* about "the blue denim Presidency" makes its case purely by innuendo, at the level of sly social sneer; no reasons supplied, none necessary—"we" simply *know*, etc.

But that comparison leads away from the point that matters. I could be mistaken, but I believe that just at this moment Crouch on Phil Woods's sloppy appearance sounds odd to most ears. Stiff. Stern. Judgmental. Who *is* this guy? Where's he get off drawing lines, telling anybody how to behave? A free country, right? Behind the questions, depending on who's asking them, stands a generalized hatred of the preceptorial stance, a conviction that fully articulated, fully reasoned criticism is invariably *mean* (cannot bespeak good will or generosity or friendship), a certainty that a sincere democratic commitment will invariably deny rather than affirm the obligation to stand on principle, to set the wayward straight.

In theory, these feelings and beliefs have been with us for some time. The language in which we think about them in their political surfacings—that of "image"—has remained fairly constant from Daniel Boorstin through Tom Wolfe. And it's possible that the spread of the tyranny of agreeableness from candidates' races to commentators' rivalries may be of minor significance, and that the teaching note I like to listen to in Crouch (a faint but not insignificant echo of the voices of great cultural conservatives long gone under the hill) isn't about to vanish for good from our scene.

But the opposite seems more likely. George Will starts his book on the high moral ground, alluding in the introduction to his "conservative convictions" and to his concern with the "timeless and troubling question[s] in political philosophy," denouncing the brand of conservatism that "tends complacently to define the public good as whatever results from the unfettered pursuit of private ends," insisting on "the dignity

SIEGE

We think there is a sweetness concealed in the rain,
a presence in the ebullient wet thicket.
And we are wrong.
Summer, the rain, oh Lord, the rain
hammers us into a joy
which we call divinity.
And we are mistaken.
The heart's weather of nipple and music
condenses only on the soft metal of personal knowledge.
Our presence is the savor.
We must get to the iron valve in the center
of that meaningless leafage.
Going past even the statuary and the unnaturalness
our faith is founded on.
To close it down.
To reduce that earthquake of flux.
Reducing it to human use.

BURNING AND FATHERING: ACCOUNTS OF MY COUNTRY

The classical engine of death moves my day. Hurrying me.
Harrowing. Tempering everything piece by piece
in a mighty love of perfection, and leaving each part
broken in turn. I walk through the energy of this slum,
walking there by the Loire among the chateaux of my country.
"Banquets where beautiful and virtuous ladies walked
half-naked, with their hair loose like brides." Or François
Premier blossoming in that first spring of France.
Flickering.
As Diane de Poitier flickers. As the ladies of Watteau flicker.
As these fine houses blur to tenements. Beyond, in the park,
the great eucalyptus are clearly provisional, waning in time.
And there are gods in the palace of leaves, their faint glaze
showing briefly as they promenade in the high air, going away.
François Premier, dimming. The trees, shuddering. The gods,
the Loire, flickering at night. My country, which does not exist,
failing. I walk here singing there by the river with all times
and places flickering and singing about me in their dialects
as I go back into the slum dreaming of Helen washing her breasts
in the Turkish morning.
But she wavers and cracks. Suddenly
the towers go down everywhere. Everything is breaking.
Everything is lost in the fire and lost in the gauging. Fire
burning inside of fire, where love celebrates but cannot preserve.
The marble heart of the world fractures. The unrelenting engine
tests everything with a steel exigence, and returns it maimed.

And yet all we have is somehow born in that murdering.
Born in the fire and born in the breaking. Something is perfected.
François Premier changes as he watches the dying Leonardo drag
through the splendid corridors. Pressure of that terrible intolerance
gets brandy in the welter. Such honey of that heavy rider.

Poems by Jack Gilbert

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of the political vocation" and laying it down that "a society that dedicates itself to the pursuit of happiness had better dedicate itself, including its government, to the pursuit of virtues indispensable to ordered liberty." Nothing could be clearer than that this is a claim to the title and responsibilities of seriousness and independence. And, as I said at the start, many well-educated readers and listeners perceive Will as deserving of the title and faithful to the responsibilities. But upon what justification? A feint in the direction of criticism, some insubstantial chatter about Marx, a teasing of designer jeans, a commendation of compassion, a vaguely bookish air. . . .

What I am saying is often said nowadays—has been said numberless times, but probably not yet too often. I am saying only that there's reason at present to ask earnest questions about our ability to distinguish the fake from the real. I understand that the problem ranks low when compared with unemployment or with the blindness of our policy makers to the variety of the country's human landscape, to the suffering as well as the abundance that landscape encompasses. But it doesn't follow that the problem is trivial. We need jobs and decent hopes; we also need a real right and a real left. But equally profoundly, in the end, we need to hang on to clarity about the difference between challenge and charm, conscience and its counterfeits—the pursuit of virtue and the pursuit of something else. □

Muncie Business

GLORIA EMERSON

Howie Snider chants the ingredients of his different pizzas over and over as if they were notes in an aria: salami, pepperoni, ground beef, sausage, black olives, mushrooms, green peppers, onions extra. He is performing for the customers at his Shakey's Pizza. His need for attention accommodates their greed. There are thirteen ingredients in the four-pound "deli," which Mr. Snider would surely be willing to sing out as well, so extravagant is his energy, so desperate his drive to make this franchise a success. Les, one of his five sons, a bright, sometimes bitter boy, understands he is trapped in his father's pizza place; desperation leaks out of him like coils of steam. But Howie Snider is about to lose it all; he is fighting to "get the dogs off my back," and he expects his children to sacrifice as he does. He runs the kitchen, a frantic place, like a battalion commander calling on the ranks to fight harder to hold the line. What he needs is absolute obedience and admiration from the troops—his loving children. His wife, who weeps in the back one day when ruin seems closer than usual, accepts the drudgery; the sons are less compliant. But they do not desert, even though some of the boys do pull off a small mutiny of brief duration.

Family Business is one of six programs to be seen on consecutive Wednesdays beginning March 24 and running through April 28 on Public Broadcasting stations. It is part of Peter Davis's remarkable series *Middletown*, which was filmed in Muncie, Indiana. The title, of course, was taken from the pioneering work of the same name published in 1929 by the sociologists Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd. The Lynds studied the day-to-day life of a typical American urban community; the place was Muncie, the code name Middletown. Davis focuses on the same six areas that the Lynds used to organize their study: politics, leisure, religion, work, marriage and education. Each theme is given its own program; each was produced by Davis in conjunction with a number of film makers and directors.

But to say that *Family Business* is a ninety-minute television film about Americans at work is foolish. Its real themes are despair, coercion, love, adolescence, loyalty, money—in short, the very confusing world of American culture. The leading player is, of course, Mr. Snider with his phosphorescent personality, a one-time seminarian, a lieutenant colonel in the Marines and now washing dishes and baking pizzas. He is by no means a powerless man even if the dogs are very close. At a family conference,

Gloria Emerson is the author of Winners and Losers *(Random House/Harvest), which won a National Book Award in 1978.*

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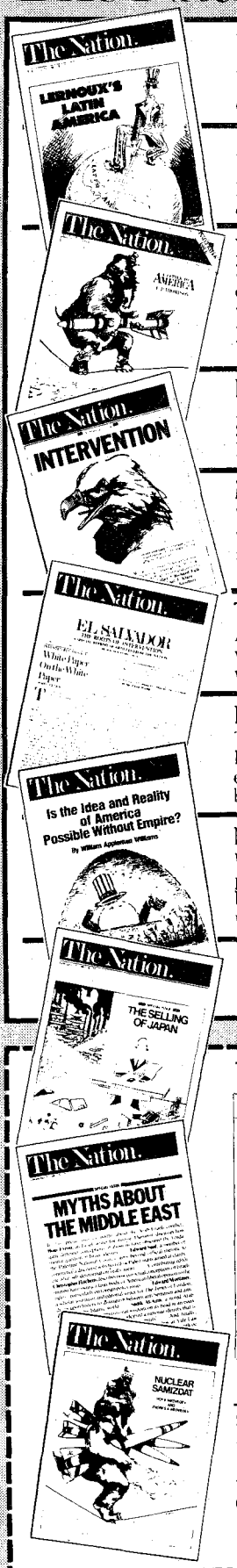

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he is not above pleading and threatening his wife and his children to get them committed to the cause of saving his Shakey's: "I'm proud of what we've done. But if that business goes down the tubes, your dad is gonna be, you know, really hurting psychologically and emotionally for a long, long, long while, O.K.?" The children, even the married ones, wait to hear their sentences. He obliges: "Larry, you're going to be janitoring two nights a week and that is the money you pay me back. In other words I'm taking money away from the janitor and giving it to you so you can give it to me. You owe me $288." They eat steak and drink beer. Lisa, the daughter in college, tries the hardest to go along with him. One of the sons cannot help weeping as he speaks of the pride his father had as a Marine, but Mr. Snider cannot allow this. He responds by boasting that he is hailed in town as "Mr. Shakey's." Lisa is reminded that her father is paying for her orthodontist and for her car. She wants to sacrifice and offers to leave college, something that Mr. Snider won't permit. "All right. But it can wait on me," Lisa says, "I'm a female . . . I don't want a lifetime career."

In the end Howie Snider triumphs so cleverly that even the sons who hate to see Shakey's grinding him down consent to the new push to save the place. *Family Business* is often extraordinary theater, and never more so than in the scenes where Mr. Snider puts on a floor show, cajoling customers in a half-empty room to come to life, to give back some of his own gaiety. "What I'm trying to do is get you to go to number 12 on the song sheet," he says in one of these scenes. "We like to think of it as Shakey's love song. If you didn't come with somebody that turns you on, look around and find someone who does, look in their eyeballs and sing with us, 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart.' " The gifted cinematographer on *Family Business* told me he thought Howie Snider was a "wonderful man." Others may not be so sure, but looking in *those* eyeballs is an awesome business.

The first program to be aired in the series is *The Campaign*, a mayoral race in Muncie between two dissimilar men: the huge, indulgent, sentimental Irishman, Democrat Jim Carey, and his opponent, Alan Wilson, a tidy and restrained Republican who seems as unhappy about campaigning as Carey is

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delighted. In a remarkable scene Carey, once the chief of police and sheriff of Delaware County, tries to reach a group of high school students who seem immune to the pain of others. He describes his splotchy past: he was once indicted but the case was dismissed; later he was charged with bribery and found not guilty. Suddenly, he tells them about the suicide of his first wife, who shot herself in their bedroom and was discovered by their young child. Carey trembles and begins to cry. The students do not care; I suspect they are children without feelings, only suspicions.

The campaign, with all its horrors and lunacy, is made poignant and startling by Carey's thrashings, his bravura, his realization that his moment may have passed. We may not approve of the man, but what is splendid is the life within him, an engine that never stalls. He and Howie Snider have this in common: an outrageous and stubborn insistence on living intensely. Carey begins to get apprehensive as the campaign ends: "This will make my sixth election. . . . Never was a loser, don't like to lose and we don't intend to lose, but then down deep inside of you you have to realize that's a possibility." When Alan Wilson is told he has won, he says, not quite joking: "What have I done?" When Carey insists that his entourage follow him to Wilson's terrain to congratulate the victor, the grand gesture is wasted and he is ignored. In the end, then, it is Carey, with all his sins, who appears heroic and takes our hearts.

Peter Davis, who is best known for his film on Vietnam, *Hearts and Minds*, and for his television documentary *The Selling of the Pentagon*, explores, measures and understands America by probing one community. He has done something of the same thing in his first book, *Hometown*, which is about Hamilton, Ohio, and will be published this month (Simon and Schuster). In the television series, Davis succeeds so well that even those who regard the television as no more than a household appliance should relent and watch all six programs. After *The Campaign* the series includes *The Big Game*, March 31; *Community of Praise*, April 7; *Family Business*, April 14; *Second Time Around*, April 21; and *Seventeen*, April 28. The programs had for me the odd, unexpected effect of making me feel more loving about a country that usually fills me with alarm. □

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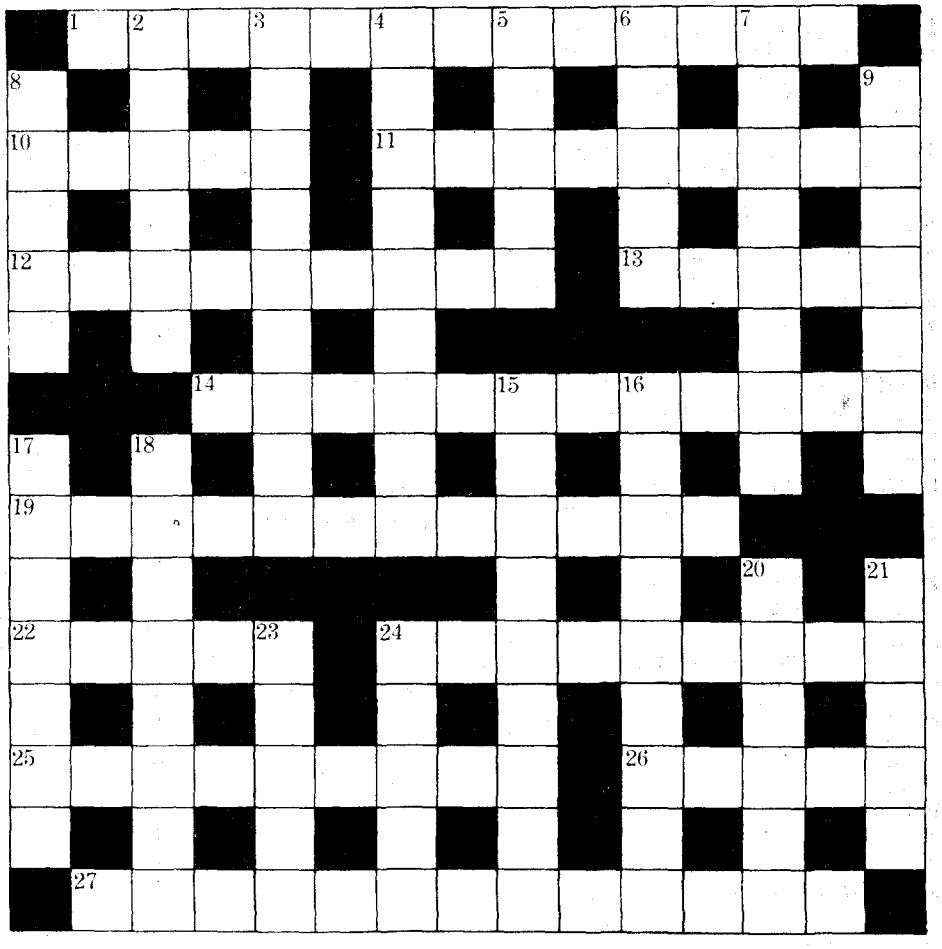

ACROSS

1 The inefficiency of plants that operate only during the day? (13)
10 One of the poor things that are short and simple in poetry. (5)
11 You'll seldom catch one napping! (9)
12 In a way, my servant, and yours, if you go to church regularly. (9)
13 The limitation of allotted work? (5)
14 Black Maria? (Rather favored by suburbanites.) (7,5)
19 What suits the taste of classical record buffs? Serge suits! (12)
22 A few measures for the organ? (5)
24 Too highly governed? That's what you get for making bad decisions! (9)
25 Possibly make a charge on the harbor. (9)
26 Philo and I leave the bookworm for the book. (5)
27 Very intent lad, unintentionally disturbed. (13)

DOWN

2 The son in trouble? Really, it's sometimes comparatively like a long day! (6)
3 Strains at trifles, in a way. (9)
4 The love potion, perhaps, in *Tristan*. (9)
5 Is USA naturally a place to look for her? (5)
6 Tom, Dick and Harry, for example. (5)
7 Ailing with these leavings? (Over the bounding main to follow.) (8)
8 Grub of an unpopular variety. (5)
9 A liquid sound to a pilot. (7)
15 A cop may be—one like 19 must be. (2,3,4)
16 How Christopher's mother gets him up with a flower? (4-5)
17 Sort of gawk in, say, the same state as 25 to have it. (7)
18 Party, not concerning the overseas taverner. (8)
20 It is to be hoped such strategy prevents such war—being part of the Anglo-Balkan problem. (6)
21 Sort of riled with the quality of 1. (5)
23 According to the virago, is the temperature down? (5)
24 Red or orange—it's nothing to put on green. (5)

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L	O	N	G	H	O	R	N	S	T	E	E	R	S	
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